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# LIFE ON

# THE LAGOONS

BY

HORATIO F. BROWN

AUTHOR OF 'VENICE: AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE REPUBLIC,'
AND 'IN AND AROUND VENICE'

*FIFTH EDITION*

With Illustrations

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TO

MY GONDOLIER

ANTONIO SALIN

MY CONSTANT COMPANION

IN VENICE AND

VENETIA

# PREFACE

In preparing this new edition of *Life on the Lagoons,* I have re-written the chapter upon the structure of the Venetian estuary, and have added a very brief history of those who made it their home. I trust that this condensed account of the Venetian Republic may prove useful to those who visit the City in the Lagoons. I have also included some description of the restorations which have recently been carried out at the Ducal Palace, based upon information furnished to me by the architect in charge of the works. The addition of illustrations to the book will, it is hoped, prove acceptable. Those chapters in the first edition which referred chiefly to the mainland of Venetia have been omitted, with a view to concentrating the work upon the city of Venice; they may, perhaps, be utilised, some day, in a companion book upon the cities, villages, and castles of the Veneto.

HORATIO F. BROWN.

Ca' Torresella, Venice,
*February* 1894.

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# THE LAGOONS

## THEIR NATURE AND THEIR HISTORY

### I

THE Lagoon of Venice is a sheet of water covering a surface estimated at 160 square geographical miles. Speaking roughly, its form is that of a crescent moon: the convex side represents the shore of the lagoon towards the mainland; the concave side is formed by a number of long, narrow sandbanks called Lidi, which divide the lagoon from the open Adriatic. This sheet of water is at its widest just where the city of Venice is placed; though even there it is not more than seven miles across.

But this large body of water is neither a marshy swamp, nor a tidal lake, nor the open sea; it is a place peculiar in every way. There are three chief factors in the formation of this basin, and it is by fixing our attention upon these that we shall best succeed in understanding how the lagoons were created. These three factors are the sea, the Lidi, and the rivers.

I have placed the Lidi in the middle, because they come there in nature—between the sea and the

rivers; and because they are the most important factor, governing, as we shall see, the whole nature of the lagoons.

With the Lidi, then, we will begin. Towards the Adriatic run these long, narrow islands, never more than half a mile wide, formed of sea-sand on the one side and lagoon-mud upon the other. There has been much speculation as to the way in which these islands were formed. It is possible that at one time they belonged to the mainland, and were the real coast-line in that direction; but the land behind them being at a low level, hardly distinguishable from that of the sea, may have been flooded by the united action of the sea sweeping landward, and of the rivers—the Brenta, Sile, and Piave—sweeping seaward from the Alps and the eastern plain of Italy; and thus the Lidi, while they continued to be the limit of the sea, ceased to be the real coast-line of the mainland, but behind them lay this area of water which we call the lagoon. Or it may be that the Lidi are nothing else than the bar built by the rivers across their own mouths. These long ridges of sand were slowly piled up between the salt water and the fresh, between the rivers and the sea, as a monument of their eternal struggle whose issue was never decided. As they raised their heads above the water-level, they offered a resting-place for wind-blown seeds that blossomed into grass and flowers and manifold vegetation. They presented a sandy rampart to the

Adriatic, and kept it out, so that it could no longer break on the very shore of the mainland; but at the same time they dammed back the rivers, whose waters found a difficult and tortuous passage to the sea, and therefore submerged the delta at their mouths and made the lagoon.

Whichever view be the correct one, the Lidi came into being between the sea and the lagoon, and form the feature of highest importance in the character of the water surface upon which the city of Venice lies. Their great function is that of protection to the capital, and to her inhabitants, from two enemies—a stormy sea and a hostile force.

The Lidi form one of the most admirable natural defences against an attack which it is possible to imagine—and in this way. The long line of sandy islands is not uninterruptedly continuous; it is broken at five points, forming outlets to the sea and inlets to the lagoon: these breaks are generally known as *Porti* or ports. It is obvious that an enemy, in the days before cannon of any range were known, wishing to reach the city, must first reach the Lidi, and then pass through them with his boats; otherwise he would find himself in view of the city, it is true, but still separated from it by the stretch of the internal lagoons. The enemy, therefore, must seek out the position of one or other of these five ports, and then steer for it, before he could hope to enter the lagoon. But nature has protected each of these ports upon

the sea side in a singular fashion; and if the enemy, using his common-sense, steered straight for a port, he would soon find himself stranded upon a sandbank some distance out at sea; for the deep main channel, by which the waters flow in and out of each port, does not proceed seaward in a straight line, but in every case trends southward, having on one side of it the sea-shore of the Lido and on the other a wide bank of sand covered always with water, but so shallow that any day at low tide, if a little breeze be blowing, you may see the white line of breakers on its farther edge.

The cause of this phenomenon, which has given to Venice a second and invisible line of defence after the obvious rampart of the Lidi, is, that in the Adriatic there is a permanent current which, starting from the Mediterranean, flows up the eastern coast by Dalmatia and Istria, round by the head of the gulf, and returns by the western coast to the Mediterranean again. This steady-flowing current, in its ceaseless sweep past the *porti* of the Venetian lagoons, meets the waters that flow in and out of these *porti*. In the one case it drives the inflowing tide close to the Lido shore, and makes a channel; in the other case it draws the outflowing tide with it, deflecting it southward, and this also deepens the channel and confirms the previous operation. The channel is kept open by this daily ebb and flow, and thus becomes habitual to these waters.

But there is another, a graver and more constant, danger against which the Lidi serve as a protection to Venice and the Venetians. A hostile fleet off the Lido was a comparatively rare occurrence; but a stormy sea might spring up at any moment: yet it is only the narrow strip of sandy dune we call Lidi that protects the city from the angry Adriatic. If the scirocco should chance to blow, you will hear borne high up in the air the boom of the waves breaking on the Lido shore; should that frail sandbank once give way, the impetuous seas would come rolling in upon the city, sweeping its palaces and churches down to a watery destruction, such as the imagination of Tintoret has pictured on his canvas at S. Maria dell' Orto. And, listening to this thunderous attack of the sea, we know what the old Venetians must have felt before the Republic undertook to build those bulwarks of defence, the *murazzi* or sea-walls, along the Lido at its weakest points. For this strip of sand is never more than half a mile wide, and in some places, near Pelestrina for example, it is not a hundred paces that separate the sea from the lagoon.

The danger that the Adriatic might make incursion into the lagoon was always so serious, that from the earliest times the question of palisades occupied the attention of the Government. There is little doubt that the Lidi were originally covered with that most beautiful of pines, *Pinus pinea*, or stone pine, which used to form the glory of the Ravenna forest.

With the gradual felling and consumption of these sea-shore forests the danger to the Lidi increased, and the Government were obliged to take the matter in hand. But the earliest protection which they devised for the Lidi was not those great walls of hewn stone which run now from Pelestrina down towards Chioggia, but a much simpler and more primitive bulwark, yet one which is in use to this day. If you wish to see what the old defences of the Lido were like, make your gondolier stop on the way to S. Elizabetta, at what was once the beautiful Island of S. Elena, and there you will be able to study the device of palisade and rubbish by which the old Venetians used to prevent the sea from eating its way through the ramparts of the Lido.

The Lidi, as I have said, are the chief factor in the formation of the lagoons, and their function was, and is, more especially protection. The sea is the next important factor, and its function is pre-eminently that of vivifying. Without the diurnal movement of the sea, the lagoons would become an oozy mass of pestilential mud. Originally the sea was by no means the sole supply of water in the lagoons. The rivers Brenta, Sile, Piave, and other smaller streams used to discharge their waters into the Venetian estuary. But the mingling of salt and fresh water rendered the air of Venice malarious, and the earthy deposit brought down by the rivers threatened some day to choke up the basin, so the Govern-

ment turned its attention to the expulsion of the rivers from the lagoon. This was no easy task; for those rivers, starting from their 'high mountain cradles' among the Dolomite Alps, and having but a short course from birth to sea, acquire in their descent an impetuosity that in flood-time is irresistible. The Government, however, by dint of patience and a great expenditure, succeeded in their object. The Piave was diverted to a new mouth, the Sile was forced to follow the old bed of the Piave, and the Brenta was carried along the borders of the lagoon to the sea at Brondolo; only a very small portion of its waters now find their way into the lagoon at Fusina.

It is the sea which is the great alimentary of the lagoon, and twice a day its waters come pouring in upon the lagoon surface, sweeping round the walls of the city and through its narrow canals, performing their 'task of pure ablution,' and at their outgoing carrying with them all the refuse of the town.

But this ebb and flow of the sea in the estuary is not a simple operation—it is a complex of various similar, but perfectly distinct, operations; and it is this complexity which imparts to the lagoon much of its extraordinary character as a natural phenomenon.

To understand the nature of the ebb and flow in the lagoon, we must return for a moment to the Lidi. Those long strips of land are broken at five points.

These breaks are known as—(1.) The Porto of Tre Porti; (2.) the Porto of S. Erasmo; (3.) the Porto of Lido; (4.) the Porto of Malamocco; and (5.) the Porto of Chioggia. The Lido Port is that which conducts to Venice, and by it, under the Republic, the war-galleys used to reach and leave the city. In order, therefore, to deepen the channel by increasing the current and the scour, the Government closed the Port of S. Erasmo, compelling most of its waters to pass through the Lido Port, and very little water enters or leaves the lagoon by S. Erasmo—a quantity, in fact, that we may neglect; and in considering the internal economy of the estuary, we have to deal only with the four ports of Tre Porti, Lido, Malamocco, and Chioggia.

We shall best appreciate the nature of the ebb and flow of the tide in the lagoons by following the movement of the water as it sweeps in by one of these four ports.

The surface of the lagoon is not a stable surface. At high-tide it is water, at low-tide it is to a very large extent mudbank; but these mudbanks are cut in all directions by innumerable channels, some large and deep, kept open artificially by means of dredging, some narrow and shallow, which eventually lose themselves among the innermost recesses of the lagoon. These channels are the natural courses which the water has formed for itself in its outgoings and incomings.

ON THE LAGOON

If we follow the sea now as it enters by the Lido Port, we find it sweeping in with impetuous force and speed through that narrow opening, having all the swelling of the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Adriatic at its back. It spreads rapidly at first through the innumerable channels in the mudbanks, filling them till they brim over and flood the whole surface of the lagoon, and it looks no longer like a vast muddy field, but seems rather to be some great lake with a fairy city buoyant upon its breast. The tide flows on past Venice and Murano to Campalto, to Mestre, to Fusina, all of them upon the mainland; and the farther it draws away from the sea and its port of entry, the more it loses its speed and the slower it flows. But some of its waters do not flow straight for the mainland; they are diverted by channels to right and left. The waters to the left flow on towards Malamocco, till in a line near the Island of Poveglia they meet the tide which all this time has been coming in at the Malamocco Port, just as the tide which we are following has been coming in at the Lido Port. These two inflowing tides meet, and, as they have each of them lost much of their primary force, they easily neutralise one another, and come nearly to a standstill; then each of them deposits the burden of sand and mud which has hitherto been swept along with it suspended in its current, and so at this point of juncture a little mound or watershed is gradually built up, which, although it is of no

appreciable height, is still sufficient to compel the waters to return by the way they came when they receive their summons to the sea once more. The same thing has been happening contemporaneously on the right-hand side of the Lido Port, at the Island of the Santi, near Burano, where the tide that came in by the Lido meets and neutralises the tide that flowed by Tre Porti. And so again at the Ca'dei Furlani, near Pelestrina, the Malamocco tide meets and neutralises the Chioggia tide. These points of juncture are called *spartiacque*, or watersheds; and the result of this curious action of the tide, which I have been endeavouring to explain, is this, that the Lagoon of Venice, apparently all one, is really divided into four sub-lagoons, with three lines of separation—three watersheds at the Santi, at Poveglia, and at the Ca'dei Furlani respectively. Each of these subsections is a water system complete in itself, with its watersheds, its small streams, and its main rivers, which lead and reconduct the tide from and to the sea.

I mentioned the fact that the incoming tide loses much of its speed in its passage from the ports to the farther recesses of the lagoon, and this diminution of force has gradually produced another division of the lagoon surface into what are technically called the *Laguna viva* and the *Laguna morta*, the Live and the Dead Lagoon.

The Live Lagoon is that part of the lagoon

where the force of the tide is most active, where the difference between high and low tide is distinctly marked by the disappearance and the reappearance of the mudbanks.

The Dead Lagoon is that section of the lagoon which is nearest to the mainland, where the water hardly feels the life and the vivifying influence of the tide. It lies in semi-stagnant pools between the little islands, which are tufted with sea-grass, or tamarisk, or pale sea-lavender that spreads over the surface of the doubtful land a shimmering veil of blue in summer when the plant comes into flower, or a mantle of rich purple in autumn when the sea-lavender dies down.

Such is the action of the sea upon the lagoon. While the Lidi take the largest share in the formation of this basin, it is the sea which imparts to it the special internal characteristics which it displays—its double division into subsections and into Dead and Live Lagoon.

As the tide rises and falls in the estuary, the mudbanks are alternately covered and laid bare. But even when the tide is full it is not possible for boats to traverse the surface of the lagoon in all directions, for in many places the water is not more than three inches above the muddy bottom. It is therefore absolutely necessary for boats to keep to the courses of the deeper channels by which the sea flows in and out of the lagoon. The surface of the lagoon is traversed

by five main waterways; all of them centre in Venice. The line of these channels is defined by *pali* or posts driven into the mud along their margins.

The *pali* form not only an important feature in the Venetian landscape, but they are absolutely essential to the navigation of the lagoons. Without them even a native would be almost sure to miss his way and to find himself stranded on a mudbank, where he would have to wait till released by the rising tide. The impassability of the lagoon surface has frequently proved one of the most valuable defences of the city from the days when the Frankish chivalry under Charlemagne's son were led to their destruction by the old woman of Malamocco, *rex consilii* as she is called, who told them that Venice, which lay in sight, could easily be reached across the six miles of shoals and mudbanks and intricate winding channels. And were it not for the *pali*, of which there are upwards of 20,000, the same fate would certainly overtake many a modern voyager upon these waters. Their beauty, their fascination, their infinite variety; the glory of autumn sunsets; the tremulous white light on a summer dawn; the vast arch of heaven spread over the lagoon; the perpetual change and shimmer of colour on the water surface; the stationary, immovable Alps with their mantle of immaculate snow,—with these and with much more the reader may become intimately acquainted for himself, should he embrace a life on the lagoons.

## II

Such are the chief physical features of the lagoons, and hardly less remarkable than the lagoons themselves is the history of the way in which the Venetians settled there and constructed one of the most famous and most beautiful cities that the world has ever seen.

The colonisation of the Venetian estuary is usually dated from the year 452, the period of the Hunnish invasion under Attila, when the *scourge of God*, as he was named by his terror-stricken opponents, sacked the rich Roman cities of Aquileia, Concordia, Opitergium, and Padua. In one sense the date is correct. The Hunnish invasion certainly gave an enormous increase to the lagoon population, and called the attention of the mainlanders to the admirable asylum which the estuary offered in times of danger. When Alcuin, the great scholar from Yorkshire, was teaching Charlemagne's son and heir, Pepin, he drew up for his pupil's use a curious catechism of questions and answers. Among others this occurs: 'Quid est mare?' 'What is the sea?' 'Refugium in periculis.' 'A refuge in time of danger.' Surely a strange answer, and one which can hardly be reckoned as true except in the particular case of the Venetian lagoons. For the mainlanders were caught between the devil of Attila and the deep sea of the Adriatic, and had they not found the lagoons

ready at hand to offer them an asylum and to prove a *refugium in periculis*, it must have fared hard with them.

But this date of 452 is not to be taken as the date of the very earliest occupation of the lagoon. Long before Attila and his Huns swept down upon Italy, we know that there was a sparse population occupying the estuary, engaged in fishing and in the salt trade. Cassiodorus, the secretary of the Gothic King Theodoric the Great, has left us a picture of this people, hardy, independent, toughened by their life on the salt water; their food supply the fish of the lagoons; their source of wealth the salt which they extracted from its waters; their houses wattled cabins built upon piles driven into the mud; their means of locomotion light boats which were tied to the door-post like horses on the mainland. 'Thus you live in your sea-birds' home,' he exclaims, 'rich and poor under equal laws; a common food supports you; house is like unto house; and envy, that curse of all the world, hath no place there.' No doubt this early population of the lagoons, already intimately associated with its dwelling-place, modified by it and adapted to it, helped to form the basis upon which the later strata of population, the result of the barbarian invasions, could rest; and in all probability some of the characteristics of this early population, its independence and its hardihood, passed into the composition of the full-grown Venetian race. But

beyond the brief words of Cassiodorus we know little about these early lagoon-dwellers. It is really with the Lombard invasion (568) that the history of Venice begins its first period of growth.

The population which flocked from the mainland to seek refuge in the estuary of Venice came from many different cities—from Aquileia, from Concordia, from Padua; and though the inhabitants of all these, no doubt, bore the external stamp which Rome never failed to impose, yet, equally doubtless, they brought with them their own particular customs, their mutual hates and rivalries. While living on the mainland these animosities had wider space in which to play, and were therefore less dangerous, less explosive. But in the lagoons, under stress of suffering, and owing to confinement and juxtaposition, they became intensified, exaggerated, and perilous. There was a double problem before the growing Venetian population which required to be solved before Venice and the Venetians could, with any justice, be considered a place and a people. First, the various and largely hostile populations who had taken refuge in the lagoon had to be reconciled to each other; and secondly, they had to be reconciled to their new home, to be identified with it and made one with it.

The lagoon achieved both reconciliations: the isolation of its waters, their strangeness, gradually created the feeling of unity, of family connection, among the diverse and hostile components of the

population, till a fusion took place between the original and the immigrant inhabitants, and between the people and their home, and Venice and the Venetians emerge upon the history of the world as an individual and full-grown race.

But this reconciliation and identification were not accomplished at once. They cost many years of struggle and of danger. The unification of Venice is the history of a series of compromises, an historical example of the great law of selection and survival.

I have pointed out how natural it was that the mutual jealousies which existed between the cities of the mainland before Attila's invasion should be continued and intensified between those lagoon villages which the inhabitants of each mainland city occupied after their flight from their ancient homes.

The first organic constitutional movement in the lagoon took place about 466, when the twelve principal townships drew together in a sort of federation ; each island-town being governed by its own chief or tribune, and an assembly of the tribunes being summoned to decide matters affecting the general welfare of the whole corporate body.

But this first indication of organised vitality instantly brought to light the inherent danger which threatened the existence of the lagoon communities—I mean those ancient jealousies to which I have referred. Each township wished to become the chief city of the lagoons ; and each tribune desired to be

leader of the lagoon-dwellers, or at least *primus inter pares* at the tribunitian assembly. And the heat of this jealousy between two of the principal townships, Heraclea and Malamocco, seemed to jeopardise the very life of the Confederation. Then the first compromise took place. It was the only solution which offered itself. The individual rivals waived their claim, and the Confederation created a personal head of the State, and concentrated the functions of the Government in his hand, when they chose their first Doge, Luccio Paolo Anafesto, in the year 697.

But the danger which the creation of a Doge was intended to dispel was by no means completely overcome. The jealousy of Malamocco and Heraclea resided deeply engrained in the breast of each of their citizens; but it was certain that, whoever might be Doge, he would follow the traditional policy of his township. The creation of a Doge only intensified the internal discord which it was designed to allay. The rivalry between Heraclea and Malamocco became more and more violent, until it ended in the slaughter of Doge Orso and the abolition of the Dogeship by the whole party who were opposed to Heraclea.

The violence which brought about the murder of Orso led to the second great compromise. A new Doge was elected. He was a noble of Heraclea, it is true, but he reigned no longer at Heraclea; the seat of the Government was removed to Malamocco, and

thus an important step was taken towards the unification of the two leading townships and the annihilation of their ancient rivalry in the growing idea of the Venetian State.

Much still remained to be done ere that consummation could be reached; for though Malamocco had now become the seat of the Government, Heraclean nobles reigned, and the fact of their residence in a hostile city simply served to accentuate the antagonism, until the hatred against them was brought to a point. The Heraclean dynasty was overthrown, and the first Malamoccan Doge reigned in Malamocco. Thus a further step towards the unification of the State was effected by the gradual suppression of Heraclea, which had threatened at one time to prove an insuperable obstacle to that process. For Heraclea was not powerful enough to absorb the whole authority in the lagoon, and yet too powerful to permit any other township to do so.

And now we come to the last stage in the long operation which achieved the amalgamation of the lagoon townships and produced the State which we know as Venice: the epoch which saw the birth of modern Venice, the close of the first period in Venetian history, the period occupied in the consolidation of the various hostile and diverse populations which were flung upon the lagoon by barbarian invasions.

The pressure which effected this final union of the lagoon townships came from outside. Charlemagne

was lord of the Franks and real master of the Western world. Both Charlemagne and the Pope had definite objects of policy in view, and each agreed to assist the other in the attainment of their respective desires. Charlemagne longed to be crowned Roman Emperor, and to take the place once held by the descendants of Augustus ; the Pope wished to become a temporal prince and to possess a State in Italy. They both appeared to have achieved their object when Charlemagne led back the exiled Pope to Rome, was there crowned by him as Emperor, and there presented to the Pope the temporal sovereignty over Parma, Reggio, Mantua, Istria, Venetia. But the larger part of this donation was an empty gift. Charlemagne had no real title which would have justified him in making a present of the lagoons to any one, and the lagoon-dwellers absolutely refused to submit, or to recognise the Emperor in any way. Pepin, Charlemagne's son, undertook to reduce the lagoons to obedience, and this brings us to the events which led to the creation of the city of Rialto, the nucleus of what we now call Venice.

Pepin's idea in his attack on the Venetian estuary was to operate from the south-west corner. He took and sacked Brondolo, Chioggia, Pelestrina, and finally threatened Malamocco, the seat of the Government. The Venetians found themselves compelled to select some other place as an asylum for the old, the infirm, the women, and the children.

The spot they chose was that small group of islands at the very core of the lagoons, called Rialto, equally distant from the mainland and from the Lido shore. Pepin made one desperate and disastrous effort to reach the asylum of Rialto. But the shifty mudbanks and the intricate channels baffled every attempt. His boats ran aground, his men sunk in the mud, and were harassed and cut to pieces by the Venetians in their light and shallow vessels; Pepin was forced to retire from his enterprise under a defeat to which the physical nature of the lagoons no less than the valour of the Venetians had contributed.

Thus Rialto, the modern city of Venice, became the capital of the estuary. Malamocco was abandoned, and the seat of the Government was removed to those islands which had proved themselves the true asylum of the Venetians in their time of trouble. The choice of Rialto as the capital was determined by a double compromise, one political and one physical. In the political sphere, Rialto represented the outcome of the long struggle between Malamocco and Heraclea, which ended in the destruction of the one and the abandonment of the other. It signified the absorption and fusion of two hostile currents in policy, which had for several centuries torn and weakened the lagoon-dwellers. It proclaimed the consolidation and unification of the Venetians as a nation, individual, coherent, ready to play their part along with other nations in the history of the world.

In the physical sphere, Rialto represented the deliberate choice between the danger of the mainland demonstrated by Lombard invasion, and the danger of the Lido shore as demonstrated by Pepin's attack. Rialto, by the service of asylum which it had rendered to the Venetians, indicated itself to them as their true capital. Its position, equally distant from the sea and the mainland, designated it as the true centre and heart of the lagoons. The lagoons and the lagoon-dwellers together had saved the State, and henceforth they were united in bonds which nothing could sever.

The State which was thus created enjoyed an existence of nearly one thousand years. The history of that long life will be most easily grasped if we mark it off into its three natural periods, and consider each of these in turn.

The first period covers the years from 810 to 1310, and is chiefly occupied with the consolidation of the new community. It is during this period that the Venetian Republic was developed, emerged, and took its place among the States of Italy. The problem for Venice was twofold: external and internal. Externally the young State was called upon to fight for its existence, and in the course of that struggle for life it grew, extended its borders, and fitted itself to take over the commercial supremacy in the Mediterranean. Internally, when the Crusaders broke up the Empire of the East, the State

was forced to develop its own constitution. The external and the internal processes were nearly contemporaneous, and at the conclusion of both the Venetian Republic appears as that extraordinary oligarchy which fascinated constitutional statesmen and historians by its solidity, as that close guild of merchant princes who enjoyed the monopoly of Eastern trade for the next two centuries, and whose wealth was a source of envy to the poorer States of Europe. During this early period of growth the State of Venice had the good fortune to be left very much alone. The capital of the Eastern Empire, upon which Venice was nominally dependent, lay far off, and its rulers were not always strong; while on the nearer mainland of Italy the Goth, Lombard, and Frankish sovereigns were too deeply occupied with the task of maintaining their own existence to pay much attention to the Venetian estuary, which appeared to be so unfruitful and so unimportant. But Venice was not left free from the attacks or the threats of other foes. The Saracens in the south of the Adriatic, the Sclav pirates of the Istrian and Dalmatian coast, and, later on, the Normans of Sicily, kept the lagoon-dwellers fully occupied and in the constant practice of naval warfare, till the glorious campaigns of Doge Pietro Orseolo II. led to the subjugation of Dalmatia in the year 1000, and laid the foundation of Venetian supremacy in the Adriatic. The Doge of Venice assumed the title of Duke of

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Dalmatia, and the State commemorated the day on which Orseolo set sail by a solemn ceremony of supplication, which was subsequently developed into the famous and magnificent function of the *Sposalizio del Mar.*

The victory over the Dalmatian pirates set the seal to a long course of commercial development; it brought Venice prominently under the notice of the Western Emperor, Otho III., and arrested the attention of the ruler of the East, thus preparing the way for the next important step in the development of the State—the choice of Venice as the point of departure for the Crusades.

When the Council of Clermont determined on the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre, three States of Italy were ready to compete for the profit of transporting the Crusaders to the East. Venice was not only the most powerful, but the most eastern of the three; the choice fell on her. The Republic embarked on the Crusades in a purely commercial spirit; and the various expeditions opened to the Venetians the islands and coast of the Levant. The Venetian fleet plundered Corfu, Chios, Lesbos, Rhodes, and established colonies at Acre and at Tyre. By these operations of the year 1123 the growing Republic achieved a second movement of expansion no less important than that which had signalised the reign of Orseolo II. But the first Crusade had one highly dangerous influence on the course of Venetian history;

for while it developed Venetian commerce in the Levant, it also brought the Republic into hostile relations towards the Eastern Empire through the Venetian possession of Tyre, which the Emperors could not fail to feel as derogatory to their dignity.

Although Venetian history, during the earlier centuries of her life, is chiefly concerned with the Adriatic and the Levant, yet the lagoons were too near the Italian mainland to be able to remain absolutely unaffected by all that was taking place there. When the powerful Emperors of the house of Hohenstaufen descended upon the peninsula, intending to make their shadowy crown of Italy a solid fact, the Venetian Republic could not refuse to throw in her lot with her neighbouring communities, each one of which, like herself, was absorbed in an effort to maintain its own independence. She joined the combination of North Italian townships to oppose Frederick Barbarossa, and declared for Pope Alexander III. as against the Imperial nominee, Pope Victor IV. Frederick attacked the Republic and seized Caverzere, on the banks of the Adige, in 1158. The Venetians applied for help to their nominal overlord, the Emperor of the East. But Manuel could not forget that Venetians held Tyre; aid was refused, and the Republic was forced to declare herself a member of the Lombard League. All vigorous participation in the wars of the League was rendered impossible, however, by events which took place in

Constantinople. There the animosity of the Emperor had been gradually increasing, and not without cause. Venice had occupied Tyre, Venetian sailors, on board their ships, had ridiculed the Emperor by dressing a negro in Imperial robes. Venetian merchants were absorbing the trade of the capital, and the Venetian colony was disturbing its streets with scenes of riot and bloodshed. In March 1171 a concerted attack was made on the Venetians in the Empire; their property was confiscated, many were slain, most were imprisoned. At Venice arose an irrepressible cry for war; and thus the Republic found itself embarked upon hostilities with its nominal suzerain, the Emperor of the East, and forced into a naval campaign against the whole power of the Empire. The Venetian fleet set sail with much pomp. But the results of the war were ruinous and disastrous: plundering expeditions led to delay; the good season was lost; the armament wintered at Chios, where dirt and debauchery, rather than poisoned wells, brought on the plague. The flower of Venice fell; the whole Giustiniani family except one young monk, who was not with the fleet, and who subsequently replanted his race, perished in the harbour of Chios. The crews mutinied and sailed for Venice; the disaster could not have been more complete. The Doge paid the penalty with his life.

The position of Venice was most serious. She was

apparently bankrupt, for the State had suspended payment after the failure at Chios; surrounded by enemies; without allies; still a member of the Lombard League, and at war with Barbarossa; completely crushed by the diplomacy of her bitter enemy, the Emperor Manuel: yet at this very moment the Republic was about to rise from the bed of her misfortunes, and for the first time in her history to take a place in the affairs of the whole world. Two great Doges, Ziani and Dandolo, were destined to exalt the Republic to a pinnacle which she had never reached before—Ziani in the politics of the Western Empire, and Dandolo in the East.

The war with the Emperor Manuel, which had distracted Venice from her co-operation in the Lombard League, and prevented her from taking any share in the battle of Legnano, proved, in spite of its immediate ruinous results, a fortunate episode for the Republic. The issue of the great fight at Legnano rendered Frederick Barbarossa desirous of coming to terms with Pope Alexander. But a place of meeting which should be safe and acceptable to both parties was not easily found. The accidental neutrality of Venice, the fact that she was essentially different from all other Italian cities, being in many respects not an Italian town at all, indicated the capital of the lagoons as most suitable for the conference between the spiritual and the temporal heads of Western Europe. In 1177 the Congress of Venice

took place. The Pope left Ferrara in May, and reached San Nicolò del Lido on the 10th; the Emperor did not arrive at Chioggia till July. From Chioggia he was conducted to San Nicolò, and thence he was accompanied by the Doge, the Patriarch, the bishops and nobles, across the lagoon to the Piazzetta; passing up that open space, he came in front of the Basilica, where, upon a lofty throne, the Pope awaited him. A magnificent ceremonial, satisfactory to the Pope and humiliating to the Emperor, occupied two days, and was followed by the ratification of a six years' truce. The Republic received from her exalted guests the confirmation of her many ancient privileges. But her chief gain had been one of parade. She appeared to Europe as the host of Emperor and Pope, the friend and ally of both alike; and it is not surprising that the State should have commemorated so enjoyable an experience by the institution of the famous ceremony known as the *Sposalizio del Mar*, when the Doge upon Ascension Day of each year passed, in solemn procession, to the Lido Port, and there, dropping a ring into the sea, declared in the words *Desponsamus te, Mare*, that Venice and the sea were for ever one.

But the triumph achieved by Ziani was as nothing compared to the glory which Dandolo's Dogeship bestowed upon the Republic. Throughout the whole of the fourth Crusade, Dandolo and the Venetians

were the chief actors and by far the most important people in Europe at that moment. The same reasons which induced the Council of Clermont to select Venice as the point of departure for the first Crusade governed the choice of the Council of Soissons in 1200. Dandolo and Venice accepted the task of transport, and contracted to furnish ships for a certain number of knights, men, and horses, at a fixed sum. The Crusaders failed to keep their share of the contract; by the stipulated date the men were not ready, the money not forthcoming: the Venetians then agreed to set sail on the understanding that the crusading fleet should stop on its way to reduce the city of Zara to its allegiance to Venice. The Crusaders, much against their will, accepted these terms when they found that Venice refused to let them move from their camp on the Lido upon any other conditions. By October 1202 everything was ready, and the crusading armament departed. It was now virtually a Venetian fleet, embarked upon Venetian enterprises. Zara was reduced in spite of opposition from all the Crusaders. And, having been once diverted from its holy purpose, a second diversion in the private interests of its three leaders, Philip of Swabia, Boniface of Monferrat, and the Venetians, was all the more easily effected. This second diversion was directed to no less an object than the destruction of the Eastern Empire and its partition among the crusading pirates. Philip wished to

thwart the Pope, who was supporting his rival for the Imperial crown, Otho of Brunswick. Boniface wished to recover the kingdom of Salonica, to which he thought he had a claim. Dandolo secured for Venice the hire of the fleet for another year, a large subsidy, and the probability of extended factories and commerce in the East. An ostensible plea was put forward in the desire to restore young Alexius Comnene to the throne, from which he and his father Isaac had been driven by Alexius the Elder.

The fleet sailed through the Dardanelles and anchored opposite the Imperial City. Constantinople was attacked, and, in spite of its reputation as impregnable, was, after fierce fighting, captured, thanks to the personal valour of Dandolo and the prowess of his Venetian sailors, who were the first to plant the Lion of St. Mark on the battlements of the conquered capital. Dandolo, though he had taken the largest share in the siege of Constantinople, did not present himself as a candidate for the Imperial crown, to which the Crusaders proceeded to elect Baldwin of Flanders. But the Doge secured for his native city the most extensive development of her possessions in the Levant, and rights which enabled her to assume the title of 'Lord of a quarter and of half a quarter of the Roman Empire.' By the treaty of partition, and by subsequent treaties, the Venetians acquired the Cyclades, the Sporades, Crete, the maritime cities of Thessaly, and the islands off the

Dalmatian coast. She established an unbroken line of communication from Venice to Constantinople. She received a large share of the plunder, and many of her principal families must date the foundation of their greatness from the fourth Crusade. The basis of Venetian supremacy in the Levant was laid. After the fourth Crusade it is a new Venice with which we have to deal—a Venice of merchant-princes who held 'the gorgeous East in fee,' who began to adorn their native city and to render it in outward appearance what it was about to become in fact, the commercial capital of the Mediterranean.

But, in spite of all these obvious advantages, the action of the Venetians in the fourth Crusade was a crime. It brought its punishment later on; for by the destruction of the Greek Empire the way was prepared for the subsequent occupation of Constantinople by the Turks, and all the disastrous wars thereby entailed upon the Republic.

The year 1204, the reign of Dandolo, the fall of Constantinople, may be taken as closing the first period of Venetian history in its external aspect. The internal history, the growth of the Venetian aristocracy, is carried one hundred and six years further to the date 1310, at which epoch the Republic of Venice reached her full development.

A consideration of prime importance in the internal history of Venice is the isolation and independence which were secured to her by her geographical

position. We have seen how the Venetians, with the help of the lagoons, had been able to repel the attacks of Pepin, son of Charlemagne, and of Frederick Barbarossa; how neither Goth, Hun, Lombard, nor Frank had ever succeeded in subduing the estuary. The Venetians were therefore enabled to pursue, undisturbed by a foreign master, the line of development which their own nature indicated for them. No feudal system, arbitrarily dividing the State into classes, was ever imposed upon the growing Republic; and so, in spite of all internal ferments, the State remained homogeneous, thanks to this essential union, and was able to achieve that solid constitution which endured to the close of the 18th century. The constitutional history of Venice, from the settlement at Rialto in 810 to the final consolidation of the aristocracy in 1310, is the history of minute changes gradually working towards one inevitable result, the creation of an oligarchy. The details of that process need not detain us here. It will be sufficient to indicate the two great lines upon which the constitutional history of the State was advancing. It was possible that a powerful Doge might introduce the dynastic principle, and reduce the State to a monarchy, ruled by a single lord. But the Venetians over and over again had shown their resolve to be free: they had declared that their ancestors had not sought the lagoon to live under a master; had they desired to be slaves, there were many better places

where they might have settled. And, animated by this love of freedom, the Venetians repressed the effort of any Doge to raise his family to the position of a ruling house; under the impulse of this spirit the Venetian constitution eventually produced that series of restrictions which gradually robbed the Doges of any real authority in the State, and left them as merely ornamental figure-heads—'Doge in the Piazza, prisoner in the Palace,' as the proverb runs. But, on the other hand, while severely repressing any advance in the direction of a monarchy, the Venetians were increasing in population, in power, in importance; grave questions came to be submitted to their decision, and the machinery of popular democratic government, the machinery of mass meetings and promiscuous speeches, soon displayed its inherent unfitness for the conduct of foreign affairs. This inability was made especially clear by the disastrous war with the Emperor Manuel, and the subsequent annihilation of the Venetian fleet in 1171. The first great constitutional changes took shape in the creation of a deliberative assembly. The inhabitants of each of the six divisions of the city chose two members for each district, who in their turn each nominated forty members from their respective quarters, thus creating a body of 480 citizens who held office for one year, but who at the close of the year themselves appointed two electors to act for each district in nominating the

new Council for the succeeding year. Here, then, we find the germ of the *Maggior Consiglio*, the Great Council, the basis of the Venetian oligarchical constitution. It had its origin in the necessity for limiting the deliberative body in a rapidly growing State. In its source it was democratic, the result primarily of an election by the whole population as represented by their twelve deputies; but it contained the germ of an oligarchy in the provision whereby the assembly itself named the subsequent twelve electors. These reforms of 1172 display the very essence of the Venetian constitution. The deliberative assembly is started on its career; its members become a class in the State with definite objects in view—first, the suppression of the Doge in any attempt which he might make to develop into a governing head. In this, the new aristocracy, created by the establishment of a deliberative council, was merely carrying on the policy of the democracy which it was now called upon to represent, and was therefore able to rely on the support of that democracy as against the dynastic tendencies of any Doge. But, secondly, the new aristocracy, intending to become master in the State, developed a policy which was hostile to the people, and though carefully veiled, eventually succeeded in excluding them from all share in the government of their city.

The policy initiated in 1172 was continued throughout the next century. The fall of Constantinople,

and the sudden influx of wealth consequent thereon, all went to strengthen the growing aristocracy, into whose hands it chiefly fell, and served to mark the new nobility off more and more as a caste, as a class apart. A seal was set to this movement, and the Venetian aristocracy became, in name no less than in fact, an oligarchy, by the great constitutional measure of 1296, known as the *Serrata del Maggior Consiglio*, or closing of the Great Council, —a provision by which a seat in the deliberative assembly of the State, the Great Council, was limited to those who had sat in that assembly during the last four years. As the Great Council was the basis of the whole constitution, as all officers were elected in it, as all other departments of the governmental machinery were supplied from it, exclusion from the Great Council meant political death for a Venetian citizen. Minor provisions rendered access to the charmed circle more and more difficult, and the Venetian oligarchy in all its rigidity was completed. The animosity aroused by this violent act displayed itself in the only serious internal revolution which ever disturbed the harmony of home politics in Venice. In 1310, some of the excluded citizens, headed by members of the Tiepolo and Querini families, endeavoured to overthrow the government of Pietro Gradenigo, the Doge under whose guidance the *Serrata* had been carried out. A battle took place in the Piazza. Tiepolo was

defeated, Querini killed. The conspiracy ended in a complete collapse, leaving the oligarchy victorious. To ensure their victory, the triumphant party created the Council of Ten, a committee of public safety at first, called into existence on account of the slowness and publicity of the ordinary machinery of State. The Ten, by its activity, its absolute secrecy and unlimited powers, soon absorbed to itself the conduct of all the most delicate and important affairs of the city. In 1335 it was declared permanent, and became the chief instrument of the oligarchy in maintaining its unique and isolated position in the Republic which it had created for itself by the *Serrata* of 1296.

Here, then, at this period closes the history of the Venetian constitution; as it was left after 1310, so it remained till the fall of the Republic, with but one slight addition, the creation of the Council of Three Inquisitors of State, a Commission of the Ten appointed in 1539, chiefly with a view to discovering the machinations and the briberies of Spain.

The *Serrata del Maggior Consiglio* and the conspiracy of Tiepolo may be said to conclude the first period of Venetian history, both external and internal. It left Venice a full-grown State, with large possessions in the Levant, governed from the capital in the lagoons; with a vast and ever-growing commerce; possessed of a constitution which, if compared with the structure of other Italian States, was as iron to a reed. But this strength and solidity

concealed a latent danger. For when her Italian neighbouring princes fell, one by one, it was inevitable that Venice, the only permanent power in the north-east of the peninsula, should occupy their territory, and thereby create that land empire which roused the jealousy of Europe and the alarm of Italy, and ultimately contributed to her ruin by evoking the League of Cambray. It is this career of full-grown Venice, expanding and becoming famous, yet walking surely to destruction, which occupies the whole of the second great period of Venetian history from 1310 to 1510.

It was certain that the State, which had reached its full maturity by the year 1310, would not be able to stand still—that it would be compelled to advance, to expand, at whatever risk of opposition and defeat. This second period of Venetian history may, roughly speaking, be said to be concerned with Venetian struggles and development by sea, and with Venetian expansion and ambitions by land.

Venice had been the largest gainer by the sack of Constantinople and the partition of the Eastern Empire; but she was not the sole competitor for the traffic of the Levant. Amalfi, Pisa, and Genoa had each at different times rivalled the Venetian Republic in Constantinople; but Amalfi had died out, Pisa was crippled by Genoa, and so during this period of her sea struggles it is with Genoa chiefly that Venice is brought into contact.

The last phase of the long conflict between the two maritime republics—a struggle which Petrarch deplored as fratricidal—broke out over the question of the fur trade in the Crimea, where both Venetians and Genoese held factories. Venetian ships were seized at Kaffa on the Black Sea; representations at Genoa failed to secure reparation; war was declared (1350). The scene of the campaign was the Levant. The war opened with a series of unimportant operations; but when the great Venetian admiral, Nicolò Pisani, took the command the scene changed. Pisani was matched by another admiral of almost equal fame, Paganino Doria of Genoa. The Genoese at the very outbreak of hostilities seized and held the island of Negropont. But the scene of the campaign was soon removed to the waters of the Bosphorus. There, under the walls of Pera, Pisani and Doria joined issue. It was late in the afternoon when the attack was given from the Venetian side, and night came on before the battle ceased. But Genoese and Venetians fought by the flames of their now burning ships; the gale which fanned the fires threw the fleets into very great confusion, and at last the Venetians recognised a defeat. But the battle of the Bosphorus was hardly a decisive engagement. The loss on both sides was too equally balanced. And while both commanders were watching each other, the Venetian allies, the Catalans, sailed to attack the Genoese possessions in Sardinia.

This brought out Antonio Grimaldi with a second Genoese fleet. His orders were to throw himself between the Catalans and Venetians and to prevent a junction. But he was too late. The operation had been already carried out. Pisani left the Levant and joined the Catalans in the waters of Cagliari. There, in the month of August, the Genoese and Venetians once more measured arms. This time Pisani was victorious. He was a fine seaman, and loved abundant sea-room; in the Bosphorus he had been cramped; off Cagliari he was master of open waters. He drew out, followed by the Genoese; then, suddenly wheeling round, he ran his ships alongside of one another and lashed them together into one solid front, leaving ten galleys free to skirmish and to draw the enemy on towards his impregnable formation. The battle lasted for many hours; but first on one and then on another of the Genoese ships the ensign of Saint Mark began to fly. The Genoese lost heart. They threw themselves into the sea, or hid in their holds. Antonio Grimaldi fled towards Genoa.

The Venetians were victorious, but Pisani's victory had cost him too dear to allow him to follow it up at once. Genoa placed herself under the strong protection of the Viscontis of Milan, and Venice was balked of her desire to crush her rival. War soon broke out once more. Paganino Doria sailed from Genoa, Nicolò Pisani from Venice, with orders to intercept Doria and to protect the mouth of the Adriatic. But

Doria gave Pisani the slip, and, before the Venetians so much as knew that he was in their waters, news arrived that Parenzo and Istria were virtually in Genoese hands. The alarm was intense ; the Genoese were hourly expected off the Lido mouth, which was closed by an iron chain. But the danger passed by. The arrival of the Emperor Charles III. induced the belligerents to sign a hollow truce, which no sooner expired than these two deadly foes flew at each other again. This time war was confined to the Levant, where Nicolò Pisani and his more famous nephew, Vettor, went in search of the redoubtable Paganino. They failed to find him, and returned to winter quarters at Portolongo, opposite the island of Sapienza. The guard at the mouth of the narrow channel in which the Venetians lay was carelessly kept. Paganino's nephew, Luciano Doria, on one of his reconnoitring cruises, became aware of this. He induced his uncle to order an attack. On November 4th a surprise was carried out ; the Genoese sailed up to Portolongo, found it unprepared, and every single ship of the Republic fell into their hands.

And, as though the ruinous blow of Sapienza were not sufficient, it was followed by an alarming episode inside Venice. In 1354 the Council of Ten received warning of a plot to murder the members of the dominant aristocracy. The whole information was vague, but in the course of their investigations the Ten suddenly discovered that the Doge, Marino Faliero, was a party

to the scheme. The discovery was made on April 14th, and the massacre was designed for the 15th; on that day ten of the conspirators were hung in a row from the windows of the Ducal Palace; on the 17th, Marino Faliero was deposed from his dignity, deprived of his Ducal cap, and executed at the top of the stairs leading down to the courtyard of the Palace.

The defeat of Sapienza, the conspiracy of Faliero, and the exhaustion of a long war, all induced Venice to accept the terms of a peace with Genoa, proposed through Visconti; and during the respite thus obtained she set to work to repair her fleet and to arm herself for her final struggle with her rival. That republic was fully occupied and exhausted by internal dissensions; and, while she could do nothing to check Venetian recovery, her hatred increased steadily, till it found vent in the insult offered to the Venetian consul at the coronation of Pierre Lusignan, king of Cyprus, at Famagosta. The Genoese consul claimed precedence of the Venetian. This was refused him by the court officials. At the wedding banquet he expressed his disgust by throwing bread at the Venetian, Malipiero. A free fight ensued, and some of the Genoese were thrown out of the window. On the top of this affair at Famagosta came the outbreak of war, which was brought about when the Venetians occupied the island of Tenedos, so near to the mouth of the Dardanelles that the Genoese considered the possession of it by Venice an act of overt hostility.

Venice prepared for the campaign with alacrity. Two great naval leaders took the sea: Carlo Zeno, the impetuous, was sent to Negropont; Vettor Pisani, the able tactician and strategist, received the supreme command. He sailed for Genoese waters in 1378, defeated the Genoese fleet in a stormy sea and a deluge of rain off Cape Antium, and, after a further cruise, he returned to the Adriatic, where, in spite of his protest, he was ordered into winter quarters at Pola in Istria. In May of the following year he was still there, his ships in need of repair, his men in need of rest; on the 7th of that month Luciano Doria suddenly appeared off Pola harbour. Pisani could not restrain his Council of War; he was outvoted and forced to give the signal for attack. In spite of his own heroic conduct, which met with applause from his very foes, the admiral was utterly defeated; only six galleys out of all his fleet found shelter in the harbour of Parenzo.

It would seem that only one fact saved Venice from falling into the hands of the Genoese after the battle of Pola. Luciano Doria had been killed in the engagement; and while his successor, Pietro Doria, was on his way to assume the command, Venice had time to recover from her panic. She had time, also, to commit an act of gross injustice, which may be explained, though hardly palliated, by her panic: she disgraced Pisani and imprisoned him for six months.

When the Genoese admiral arrived, he sailed along

the shores of the Lido towards Chioggia, where he intended to establish himself and to blockade Venice until she surrendered. Doria attacked the Venetian garrison in Chioggia, and after a severe struggle he captured the town, drew his fleet within the lagoon, and took up his quarters in the conquered township. In Venice the alarm was extreme. The Government was for appointing Taddeo Giustiniani to the supreme command; but a wave of popular feeling compelled them to release Vettor Pisani from prison and to intrust the fortunes of their country to his hands. The popular instinct was fully justified. From the moment that Vettor Pisani assumed the direction of the operations the whole aspect of the war was changed. By boldly sinking ships at all the sea entrances into the lagoon, and by placing his own fleet outside in the open sea, he effectually shut in the Genoese, who, instead of blockading Venice, now found themselves blockaded in Chioggia. But the strain upon the Venetians was severe; the position of their fleet on the open sea, the severe winter weather—for it was the month of December—the continual harassing by the Genoese, day and night, in their unceasing efforts to break through the cordon—all told upon the spirits and the temper of Pisani's fleet. A mutiny was on the point of breaking out; but at length, on the 1st of January 1380, the sails of Carlo Zeno's squadron were descried upon the offing. His presence, his fiery and impetuous temper, lent courage

to the Venetians, and his sailors formed a welcome reinforcement to Pisani's exhausted troops. The siege of Chioggia was pushed without delay. The Genoese, as a last resort, endeavoured to drive a canal through the sandbank which divided the lagoon from the sea, and so to escape. They were repulsed and cut to pieces; then they lost heart; and at last, on June 24th, 1380, the whole Genoese fleet surrendered to Venice.

The war of Chioggia was a splendid victory for Venice. It was the finest display of courage, self-sacrifice, patriotism, which the growing Republic had as yet produced. Her great rival Genoa was helplessly crippled, and never recovered. Venice was left in undisputed maritime supremacy in the Mediterranean; but she was also left single-handed in those waters, with no ally to assist her against the Turk when that formidable foe appeared upon the scene.

So far, then, we have followed the growth of Venetian supremacy by sea. We must now observe how she began to expand upon the mainland.

Broadly speaking, Venice cannot be said to have begun the formation of a land empire until her supremacy by sea was already achieved. It is true that the Republic had embarked upon wars with Comacchio, a commercial rival; with Padua on account of some interference with the water system of the Brenta; with Ferrara, where the first indications

of a desire to extend upon the mainland of Italy were clearly manifested; with the Scalas of Verona, when that family showed a disposition to absorb all the mainland round the lagoons, and thus to close every outlet for Venetian merchandise. But it is not till after the war of Chioggia, when the house of Carrara came into collision with the Visconti of Milan, and were about to be absorbed by them, that the Republic of Venice took her first decided step upon the mainland of Italy. This policy of creating a land dominion, though it proved disastrous, was governed by necessity—was unavoidable; for it must be remembered that a purely maritime city like Venice, without any food-producing territory at her back, was always exposed to the dangers of starvation after every signal defeat at sea. Venice had experienced this danger after Curzola in 1298, after Sapienza in 1354. Moreover, it was certain that whatever Power held the mainland round the lagoons would be hostile to the Republic, and would endeavour to make her pay for the export of her goods, as Scala had done. A land empire, therefore, became a necessity as the State grew in population and importance. The occasion was offered during that difficult period of Italian history when the various lords of the North Italian States were engaged in destroying one another. Venice protected the Carraresi of Padua until she found them openly hostile, as in the war of Chioggia, or secretly plotting to blow up the Venetian arsenal

and to poison Venetian wells. Then the Republic joined Visconti in the destruction and spoliation of the Lords of Padua. Their downfall, in 1405, left Venice in possession of a large territory on the mainland of Italy, the Trevisan marches, Padua, Vicenza, Verona, and their districts, together with the high table-land of the Sette Communi above Bassano. And this date of the fall of the Carraresi constitutes an epoch in the life of the Republic. Henceforth Venice can no longer be considered as a purely naval and commercial Power, with interests centred chiefly in the East. She now becomes a land Power, with a land frontier to defend, with rivals always ready to attack that frontier—with all the prestige, but also with all the dangers, of an Italian State.

The Venetian policy of aggression on the mainland has always been associated with the name of Francesco Foscari. It was during his reign, under his guidance, stimulated by his enthusiasm for expansion, that Venice created the land empire which united all Europe against her. Foscari embarked on war with the Visconti of Milan, joining the league which Florence had formed against them. Visconti, after the fall of the Carraresi, was conterminous with the Republic, and, therefore, inevitably its foe. By the help of a series of great mercenary generals—Carmagnola, Bartolomeo Colleoni, Gattamelata—one of whom, Carmagnola, proved treacherous and was put to death, the Venetians extended their mainland

territory to the furthest point it ever reached. That region included the provinces of Bergamo and Brescia; it was bounded by the Alps, the Adda, the Po, and the sea. Venice acquired a preponderating influence in North Italy, and her aggressive conduct towards Milan in the west and Ferrara in the south fostered the idea that she contemplated the absorption of all Italy north of the Apennines. Native princes like Sforza and Cesare Borgia, foreign sovereigns like Lewis XII. and Maximilian, were all equally jealous or equally greedy. A cry arose against 'the insatiable cupidity of the Venetians

THE STATUE OF COLLEONI.

and their thirst for territory.' The enemies of the Republic coalesced at Cambray, and decreed the destruction of Venice and the partition of her dominions.

But a hostile combination of European and Italian Powers was not the only disaster which was threatening the very existence of the Republic. Early in the century the Turks had already begun to cause alarm, and in 1416 the Venetian and Turkish fleets met each other for the first time in the famous battle of Gallipoli. The Venetian admiral, Loredan, reports that the battle lasted from the morning early till past two o'clock. The Turks fought 'like dragons,' and the flower of their men was on board: but Loredan, himself leading the way, attacked and captured first one galley, then another, sunk a third, and finally put the whole fleet to rout. The victory of Gallipoli was a splendid achievement of Venetian arms; but it was quite insufficient to crush, and hardly sufficient to check, the onward movement of the Turk. The siege of Constantinople began on the 6th April 1453; a Venetian squadron was in the harbour, but with orders to confine itself to the protection of Venetian merchants and citizens. The Emperor Constantine fought with conspicuous bravery, but on May the 29th the city fell; the last of the Roman Emperors was buried under a mound of his followers.

Thus, while the Republic was being brought face to face with new and difficult complications on the

mainland of Italy, in the Levant also events assumed a complexion which was hostile to her interests. For, instead of a weak stationary Power at Constantinople—a Power which encouraged rather than hindered the development of Venetian commerce—the rulers of the East were now a fierce, expansive, anti-Christian nation, from whom Venice had little to hope and much to fear.

The Sultan, Mohammed the Conqueror, continued his victorious progress. The Morea fell in 1460, and the attack on Mitylene in 1462 warned Venice that she was face to face with foes who intended to dispute her supremacy in the Levant. Moreover, the ignominious failure of Pius II. to carry out a crusade showed that Europe would leave Venice alone to battle single-handed with the Turk. The occupation of the Powers with their own more immediate affairs; their slight interest in the Levant; their jealousy, too, of Venice, which had enjoyed the monopoly of the Levant trade, all rendered them indifferent spectators of a struggle which gradually exhausted the resources of the Republic. Nor was it possible for Venice to live on terms of amity with the Turk. She, indeed, did her best to enter into treaties, to trade with him, not to fight him; but the State was Christian in name at least, and this policy of friendliness with Islam ended by raising an outcry in Christian Europe against the perfidy of Venice, who, while absorbing her Christian neighbours in Italy, was in unholy league with infidels

in the Levant—an accusation which was of some weight in the final combination of European Powers to undo and dismember the Republic. But even had Venice been unhampered by the suspicions of Europe, enduring alliance with the Turk was impossible so long as Venice held possessions in the Levant which the Turk desired for his own. Wars were inevitable. Negropont was lost in 1470; Scutari, heroically defended by Antonio Loredan, in 1474, but surrendered by the treaty of 1478, which closed a disastrous struggle of sixteen years.

Some compensation for such heavy losses was secured in 1488, when the Republic, as parent and heir to Caterina Cornaro, her adopted daughter, took over the kingdom of Cyprus, which Caterina inherited on the death of her young and handsome husband, Jacques Lusignan. But this accession of importance was marred by the harsh, if not treacherous, conduct by which it was achieved; and though it seemed an addition to Venetian magnificence, it was really a source of weakness, which kept the Republic at feud with the Turk and led to the outbreak of a fresh Turkish war. That war was brief and disastrous. Antonio Grimani, the Venetian admiral, was defeated at Sapienza; and the Grand Vizir, with more truth than politeness, expressed the situation when he dismissed the Venetian ambassadors by saying: 'You can tell the Doge he has done wedding the sea; it is our turn now.'

From yet another quarter misfortune weighed upon the Republic. In 1486 Diaz rounded the Cape of Good Hope. A new commercial route was opened to the world. Hitherto all the traffic between East and West had passed up the Red Sea to Suez, or up the Persian Gulf to Ormuz, had been conveyed across the isthmus or through Asia Minor, and shipped again at Alexandria or Aleppo for the European markets. Venice, who was mistress of the Levant, had reaped almost the entire benefit of the carrying trade, and the city had become the great emporium and exchange mart between Europe and Asia. After Diaz's voyage all the wealth of the Indies could be carried in unbroken cargoes round the Cape of Good Hope, and would be discharged, not at any Mediterranean port, but in the harbours of Portugal, Holland, and the Hanseatic towns. And, in fact, the Venetian market began to feel the effect of the new Cape route almost at once. A Venetian merchant, Priuli, made note in his diary, when he heard of Vasco da Gama's voyage in 1497, 'This is the worst piece of news that we could ever have had.'

Thus upon all the three main lines of Venetian history—her mainland policy, her Levant relations, her commerce—this third period of the Republic's existence was closing in gloom. She had acquired a large landed territory at the price of a European combination against her. She had failed to protect Constantinople against the Turk, and was now fighting

for her life in the Levant. Both mainland and Eastern policy were making a ruinous strain upon her exchequer; and just at this critical moment the very foundation and source of her wealth, her Eastern traffic, was stolen from her by the discovery of the Cape route.

The League of Cambray, which was joined by the Emperor, the Pope, the Kings of France, Spain, and Hungary, the Dukes of Savoy and Ferrara, was concluded in 1508. Its professed object was to check the insatiable greed of Venice and to partition her empire. All the members of the League were to receive some portion of the widespread territory of S. Mark; nothing was to be left to her save the lagoon islands whence she had originally emerged. The operations of the League began from Rome. A bull of excommunication and interdict placed the Republic outside the pale of the Church. Venice forbade the publication of the bull, and caused it to be torn down wherever it had been affixed to the walls. The King of France followed up the Papal attack. The battle of Agnadello, fought on May 14th, 1509, annihilated the Venetian army of Alviano, leaving only Pittigliano's corps, which was too weak to offer any valid resistance. No protection stood between the French and the lagoons; one blow had paralysed and destroyed the land empire of Venice, built up at the cost of so much self-sacrifice in men and money. A large part of the Cambray programme

had been carried out, and by 1st June, says Sanudo, not a town in Lombardy remained to Venice.

But the dilatoriness of the Emperor, who failed to appear on the scene, and the bad faith of the Pope, who deserted the League the moment that he had secured his share—Ravenna, Faenza, Rimini—combined to save Venice from total destruction. The growing jealousy of French successes rendered it easier to form a league against them; and three years after the signature of Cambray for the annihilation of Venice we find Venice in league with the Pope, Spain, the Emperor, and the King of England against their quondam ally France.

Venice was saved from immediate danger of seeing the enemy actually in the city. The great game of rivalry between Francis I. and Charles V. rendered it possible for her always, by a little skilful management, to secure an ally who could protect her. For the future Venice is little more than a pawn on the chessboard of European politics. Her territory suffered, of course; French and Spanish armies marched and counter-marched, towns were besieged, taken, recovered. But it is not Venice who is the actor; she lies exhausted and passive at the feet of sovereigns too powerful for her to affront.

In 1529 Charles V. effected the settlement of Italy. Venice returned to her old mainland possessions, extending as far as the Adda to the west, the farthest point she had reached in Foscari's reign; and

the Adda remained her western frontier till the fall of the Republic. Her days of expansion were over.

The fourth and last period of Venetian history, from the year 1530 down to the fall of the Republic in 1797, need not detain us long. The vital, expansive power of Venice was dead; but the State lived on as a magnificent pageant. The city became a resort of pleasure, which attracted and dazzled Europe. 'Renowned Venice, the admiredest citie in the world, a citie that Europe is bound unto, did you know the rare beauty of the virgin city you would quickly make love to her:' so writes the enthusiastic Englishman, in love, as so many of his countrymen have been, with this marvellous city in the sea.

Something, too, of old Venetian courage, of self-sacrifice, seamanship also, remained to animate the long, though hopeless, struggle with the Turks. The defence of Cyprus in 1570-71 was a deed as heroic as any that Venetians had ever achieved. The names of Marc Antonio Bragadin and Famagosta are eternally associated on the bead-roll of fame. Nicosia fell in August of 1570, but Famagosta held out another year. Household goods, bedding, sacks, clothes, everything available was used to repair the breaches ploughed by the Turkish guns. The women, the monks, the Bishop of Limasol, all took their turn upon the walls. But the vast numbers of the Turks enabled them to hurl fresh troops in assault after assault upon the besieged, who were slowly

worn out, and unrelieved from home. At length, on August 2nd, Bragadin consented to hoist the white flag. The Turkish commander's terms were moderate; the brave Oriental respected his courageous Christian foe. The garrison was to march out with flags, guns, and church bells. Mustafa supplied the ships. Everything went smoothly till Bragadin, with some of his officers, sought the Turkish camp to surrender the keys of the city. His reception was cordial, at first. But something suddenly infuriated Mustafa; almost before any one knew what had happened, four of Bragadin's staff were killed, and Bragadin himself was first mutilated, then flayed alive, and his skin, stuffed with straw, was paraded through the streets under a red umbrella. The trophy was taken to Constantinople, but was stolen from the arsenal there in 1580, and is now contained in an urn in the Church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo in Venice. The loss of Cyprus was partially compensated by the great victory of Lepanto, won in October 1571. The Venetian fleet, under the Doge Venier, played a notable part in the battle. But the advantage was not followed up. The Spanish part of the Christian armament retired into winter quarters. No blow was struck at Constantinople; the Turks soon recovered from their defeat.

The defence of Cyprus in the 16th century is paralleled by the defence of Crete in the 17th. Equally heroic was the long resistance of Candia, the

capital. The last great Venetian commander, Francesco Morosini, made his first appearance on the scene. But neither his courage, nor the impetuous bravery of the French volunteers who took service against the Turk, sufficed to save Crete from the same fate as Cyprus. In 1669 the last great Venetian possession in the Levant passed away from the Republic for ever. For one brief moment, in 1686 to 1687, the prowess of Francesco Morosini restored the prestige of Venetian arms. But by 1716 the Turk was once more in possession of the Morea, and the peace of Passarowitz closed the history of the Republic in the Levant.

Venice spent the last years of her life in an atmosphere of refined enjoyment. There was a revival of art and letters in Longhi and that great master, Tiepolo; in Gozzi, Goldoni, and Buratti, in Galuppi, Jomelli, and Hasse. It was a charming existence which Venetians and foreigners alike enjoyed. But the French Revolution loomed ever nearer and nearer. The portent of Napoleon crossed the Alps. He hated the close aristocracy which called itself a Republic: 'Io non voglio più Inquisitori; non voglio più Senato, sarò un Attila per lo Stato Veneto.' And before Napoleon's 'io voglio,' Doge, Senate, Ten, and Great Council had to bow their heads. An alteration in the constitution was voted on the 12th May 1797; the Venetian Republic disappeared from the history of the world.

# THE GONDOLA

## I

An intimate knowledge of the lagoons, and of the people who live upon them, is almost impossible without the help of the gondola. Any one, therefore, who has become enamoured of the lagoons and lagoon life will find himself obliged to make friends with the gondola. That is no difficult task, for it is an historical vessel, unique in itself, and a constant source of admiration and surprise, as one sees its great length obeying the impulse of its single rower, who guides it with a skill that takes rank as a fine art. It is the most charming carriage in the world, and so thoroughly Venetian that Venice would hardly be Venice without it. There is a sentiment and a flavour of antiquity about the gondola which it owes to its leisurely, natural development. It is in no sense an invention; it is a growth directed by the needs of its native place, bearing on its structure of to-day the impress of Venetian life and history. Through centuries of experience the boat has been fashioned and modified, until at length it has achieved the union of beauty, ease, and usefulness. The long black skiff, with its

graceful lines, its swanlike prow sweeping up from the water, and its gliding movement, is a dear and lovely feature, the most familiar in the city of the sea. So perfect is its structure that the poised oarsman behind, by a delicate turn of his wrist, may guide the boat whither he will. The gondola is so obedient, and so admirably adapted to the work it has to do, that, among all the narrow and intricate canals of Venice, there are only two points where a gondola may not pass, even at low water—the one near the great theatre of the Fenice, and the other near the Palazzo Mocenigo at San Stae.

The gondola is made for solitude or for company —the best company, the company of two—as the fancy may dispose. The rower is out of sight, behind. Nothing indicates movement but the ripple and the lap of water under the bows, the slow swaying of the steel *ferro* from side to side, and the slower gliding by of palace fronts. There is no jolt of springs, no rattle and bang of wheels, no noise of horses' hoofs upon the road, above all, no dust; sea and sky are in your sole possession, and the breeze just born of the gondola's progress; there is an infinite liberty of contemplation secured by space and solitude. Or, in company, what lounge more admirably arranged than the cushions of the gondola? You are near your companion, but not too near; you may speak without raising your voice. Would you lean nearer, or lean away? You have only to wait the sway of the boat,

yield to it, and the thing is done, naturally, not by you, without any *brusquerie*, almost unconsciously. The gondola lends itself to its master's mood. It is the boat for leisure, however, and not for business; the carriage of a leisured people: there is no hurry in its movement; all is quiet and deliberate. Life was not meant to be bustled through and done with, by the men who developed the gondola; and it would be difficult to discover any greater provocative to utter idling than this boat of Venice. That was surely a work of supererogation which the Venetian doctor undertook when he addressed a treatise to his English friend upon the art of sitting in a gondola. The art is all too easy to learn; it consists in yielding yourself to the cushions and the boat. The gondola itself will teach it you without the help of any learned discourse.

The trade of making, cleaning, and repairing gondolas is, of course, active in Venice. The gondola builders are called *squerarioli*, after their building-sheds, known as *squeri*. These *squeri* are open yards usually on the borders of some small canal in the back parts of the town. They are picturesque places with their sheds, where the new gondolas are built and the old ones stored. In front of the shed a long slope leads down to the water's edge; this is well plastered with mud so as not to injure the boats when they are drawn up or sent down into the canal. The pitch-pot is usually boiling in one corner, and sending

up its thick and pungent fumes, while the men, pitch-blackened, with trousers rolled up, shirt open, and a saint or a charm hanging around their throats, move about like demons *in inferno*, among the smoke and blaze; for the pitch must be applied hot, and the bottoms of the gondolas are often dried by burning piles of loose straw beneath them, and the flames leap high into the air.

The first thing to be done in building a gondola is to choose the various woods of which the boat is to be made. The wood must be well seasoned, and without knots, if possible. These points are of even more importance in the structure of a gondola than in the case of other boats, for the planks of which the vessel is made are so thin that they are liable to warp, and the knots become loosened and start. When the wood has been chosen, the *squerariol* begins to lay down the gondola. The governing measurements, of greatest length and greatest width, are determined by four posts, placed at these main points. These measurements are permanent; and therefore each gondola that is turned out of a *squero* resembles, in dimensions, its neighbours that come from the same workshop, though choice of wood, care in workmanship, and such infinitesimal variations as an eighth of an inch in depth or width will make all the difference to the speed and durability of the boat. The operation of building begins by setting up the stern and bow posts, the *asta da*

*poppe* and the *asta da prova*, which are made of oak. The ribs, or *corbe*, of walnut, cherry, or elm, are then laid down—they are flat at the bottom, for the gondola is a flat-bottomed boat; and round the uppermost ends of the ribs, joining them all together, the binder, or *serchio*, of oak is fastened. At the points where the bow and stern deckings are to begin, two bands of walnut, rising in the middle, and called the *ponte fossine*, run across the boat, from one *serchio* to the other, and act as a counter support to the ribs, which might otherwise be pressed in by the strength of the binder. When this is finished, the hull of the gondola, as far as its strength and structural lines go, is complete. It remains to add the walls, or *nomboli*, of pine, and the *fondo*, or bottom, likewise of pine; the floor, or *pogiola*, rests upon the ribs, and protects the bottom, which is too delicate to bear treading upon without danger of starting. The decking of the bows used to be made of walnut-wood elaborately carved. It is more usual now to employ pine in large plain slabs, called *fiubone*, divided into four compartments on each side by the *cantinele*, thin strips of carved or beaded wood. The little door which closes the decking in front, and makes the bows a safe store-house for the gondolier's belongings—his oil, lamps, sand for polishing, coats, old hats, and dinner—is called the *portella*; and the two steps in bows, by which one embarks or lands, are the *trastolini*.

The *squerariol* has only to furnish the two *forcole*, or rowlocks, and the foot-rest, or *ponta piede*, the sloping piece of wood under the rower's hind foot, whence he launches himself forward to the stroke, and his part in the construction of the gondola is finished; for the oars, of beechwood, are bought elsewhere.

It must be observed that the gondola is not built to lie perfectly flat upon the water; it is tilted slightly to one side, the side of the *forcola da poppe*, and is about an inch deeper in the water on that side than on the other. Moreover, if a straight line be drawn the whole length of the boat, from the *asta da poppe* to the *asta da prova*, it will divide the boat into two unequal parts. The side on which the hind rower stands is considerably larger than the other; and the *serchio*, or outer line, on the side of the *forcola da prova*, is longer and makes a wider curve than the *serchio* on the side of the *forcola da poppe*. This list is given to the gondola by cutting away the *corbe* on the side of the *forcola da poppe* so that the angle which they offer to the water, at the junction of sides and bottom, is more gentle than on the side where the hind rower stands. On that side, too, the gondola, as we have seen, presents a broader bottom to the water, and therefore more resistance; and thus the weight of the rower, which, if the boat lay quite flat on the water, would raise his *forcola* too high, destroy the balance of the gondola, and injure his control, is

counteracted, and the boat is rendered perfectly obedient.

So far the gondola will have cost three hundred lire. But there is a great deal to be done yet, before it is complete in all respects. In the first place, there are the iron finishings for the bow and the stern. These are not made at the *squero*, but at some smith's shop, and must be thought about and bargained for separately. Each part of that singular beak, or rostrum, which ornaments the bows of a gondola has its own name. The large hatchet-like head is called the *palamento*, or blade. Below the *palamento* come the six teeth, or *broche*, projecting outwards; and between the *broche*, in each alternate space, are three *spine*, or steel pins, which help to fasten the *ferro* to the gondola. In a line with the topmost *broca*, but projecting towards the inside of the gondola, is another tooth called the *contra-broca*. Below the six teeth comes a long thin strip of steel which curves under the bows and clings close to the boat, and helps to keep the whole *ferro* in its place; this is called the *paletta*. These various parts complete the *ferro da prova*. The *ferro da poppe* is much simpler, being, in fact, a curve of plain steel, rounding and finishing the stern-post. A *ferro*, to be perfect, should have the edges of its *broche* in one straight line; but in these days of hurried workmanship a good *ferro* is not always to be found. They used to be made of hand-wrought iron, light and pliant, that would bend and

not break if they came in contact with a bridge. Now, the new *ferri* are cast in moulds, and are heavy and brittle. A good gondolier will, very likely, possess an old *ferro*, which may have been an heirloom in his family for many years; for the *ferri*, if properly cared for and not allowed to rust, are indestructible, and will outlive many gondolas. The price of the *ferri* complete is about one hundred lire; so that as yet our gondola has cost four hundred lire.

But, besides the hull and the *ferramento*, there is yet a third department to be considered before the gondola is fully equipped: the *felze*, *tenda*, *stramazzetti* or cushions, and *puzioli* or arm-rests, with their brass fittings of sea-horses, dolphins, harps, or columns. The *felze*, or little house in which the passenger sits, secure from rain or wind, is the most expensive item in the gondola. It is made of a strong wooden frame, thickly covered with woollen cloth, always black, and ornamented by tufts of silk or wool dotted along the roof. It has a door and two windows, and a little brass shrine for the picture of the patron saint. The door and all the inside is made of walnut-wood, stained black and richly carved, frequently with scenes from Tasso. The mountings of the *felze* are of brass; and the cost of the whole will be about five hundred lire. The *tenda*, or summer awning, is a modern device, so modern that the more conservative among the Venetian families are slow to adopt it. It was introduced for the convenience of foreigners,

and is really extraneous to the gondola. Yet it must be admitted that the *tenda* adds considerably to the enjoyment of the boat in summer weather; and its pale creamy curtains, lined with blue, help to relieve that monotony of black, which is sometimes charged against the gondola. The carpet, the cushions, and arm-rests must be added, and then the gondola is complete. These last items will cost about two hundred lire more; and that will bring the whole price of a new gondola up to one thousand one hundred lire. A young gondolier, just starting in life, is not likely to have such a sum by him; so the practice is to pay down a certain amount at once, both to the *squerariol* and to the *fornitore*, who supplies the carpets and cushions, and to guarantee the discharge of the remainder in monthly or quarterly instalments. When a gondola is new, it is left unpainted on the outside for the first year, as an intimation of its youth, and also as a sort of guarantee to any possible purchaser; the value of a gondola falls immediately after it is painted, for then it is difficult to ascertain the condition of the wood and the presence or absence of knots.

The gondoliers soon become devotedly attached to their own boats, studying their characters and learning their peculiarities; for each gondola has a character and temperament of its own, in spite of the fact that they are all built on the same model and look so much alike, and a gondolier's skill in rowing

¶ Uenetia ꝛ ciuitas inclyta condiꝯ: aut poꝰ ampliaꝯ circa hꝛcrpa: ãno. 450. non a pastoribꝰ sicut Roma: sꝫ a potentioribꝰ ꝛ ditioribus ꝓuinciaꝝ aduenis: illicꝫ ꝑꝑ ꝑsecutiõez attile ꝺfugiẽtibꝰ Mirũ ẽ ꝛ sũmo extollendũ laudis ꝓeconio: ꝓtuisse a tot tãqꝫ diuersis vrbiũ ꝛ oppidoꝝ ꝑꝑlis ꝺditã ciuitatẽ: p anos mille cũ tali incremẽto ac gl'ie splẽdoꝛe: vnanimiqꝫ sagacitate ꝺfu'are.

FROM RATDOLT'S 'FASCICULUS TEMPORUM,' 1480

largely depends upon his knowledge of his boat. He and his gondola become one. A community of interests is established between them which soon ripens into affection; and his duty to his gondola is at least as binding on the conscience of a good gondolier as his duty to his family or his neighbour. He spends hours every day in sponging, scrubbing, and drying his boat; and soon comes to know every nail in its hull, and every scratch upon its steel or brass. I have heard of a gondolier who identified, swore to, and recovered a pair of sea-horses that had been stolen from him, on the strength of certain almost invisible scratches, which had escaped the notice of the thief, or which the thief trusted would be unknown to the owner.

With so much uncovered metal in the fittings of a gondola, it is clear that the chief labour connected with the maintenance of the boat will be to keep these metals in a state of high polish. The brass-work does not give so much trouble; but the least drop of rain or dew, if it is allowed to settle for some hours upon the *ferri*, will produce a rust spot which may take months of scrubbing to remove. And this implies a polishing and oiling of all the steel-work twice a day in wet weather—a matter of at least an hour and a half. Indeed, the readiest way to determine whether a man who offers his services is a good gondolier or not is to give a glance at his *ferro*; that will show his

professional character in a moment. But besides the metal fittings, the hull of the gondola requires constant attention to keep it free of weeds which foul its bottom, and to protect it from the deadly teredo which so rapidly bores through its planking. Once every three months in winter, and at least once every twenty days in summer, when the sea is warm and the weeds grow fast, the gondola must be sent to the *squero*. There it is hauled on shore, scraped, dried, either by the sun or by a fire of straw, and plentifully anointed with tallow. This operation makes a most surprising difference to the speed of the boat; and a little practice will soon let one know whether the gondola has lately been to the *squero*, or ought to be sent there. The process of cleaning occupies a whole day; so that a gondolier not only loses a day's work, but has to pay besides about four lire, the cost of the operation; and this, in summer, is a serious tax upon his monthly earnings.

But, on the whole, it repays a gondolier to attend punctually to his boat. If he does so, it will last him in excellent order for at least five years. At the end of that time he can sell the hull for eighty or a hundred lire, keeping, of course, the *felze*, *tenda*, cushions, and other furnishings for his new boat. A gondola of five or six years old will probably find its way to one of the less frequented ferries, where it will do duty for another five years, gradually losing its graceful curves and form as the woodwork

fails, till at length it becomes a *gobbo*, with its bows no longer sweeping up in a proud curve, but buried in the water. Then its day is over. It is fit for nothing but to be sold for five lire, broken up, and burned in the glass furnaces of Murano, the crematory of most ancient gondolas.

## II

So far we have followed the construction, the birth, life, and death of a modern gondola. But a boat of this elaborate character did not come into being and reach perfection in a single day. Its development, or natural history, was a slow and long-drawn process, regulated partly by necessity, and partly by the movement of life in Venice that produced it. As the city grows in wealth and luxury, we can observe the growth of that singular carriage which is so intimately connected with all our associations of Venice.

A race of people who had made their home upon the sea could not exist without a water-carriage; the bare fact of their dwelling-place implied an intimate connection with boats. And long before the Venetians had gathered together at Rialto, while they were still scattered about among their twelve federated townships, the earliest authentic document relating to Venice, a letter of Cassiodorus, Theodoric's secretary, notes the light boats that were to the Venetians as horses tied to the doors

of their houses. And later, in the year 837, William of Apulia, a Norman poet, describing the habits of the Venetians, allies of the Byzantine Emperor against his race, has the following passage:—

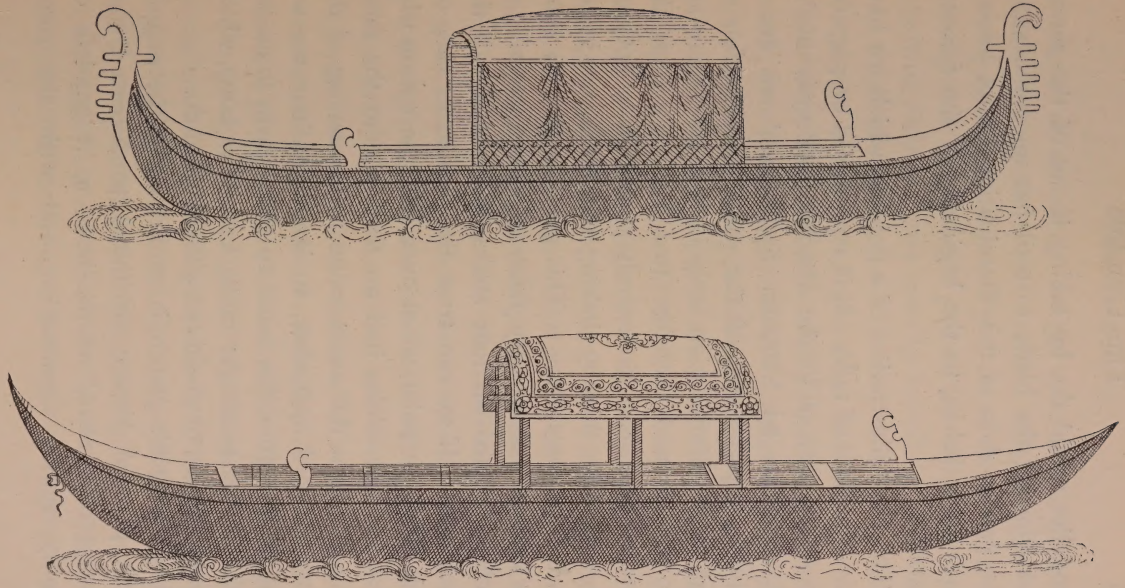
> 'For this race
> Hath made its dwelling within sea-girt walls;
> Nor is there passage found from house to house,
> Save by the skiffs that bear them o'er the tide.'

The boat, from the very earliest days, was an essential element in the economy of the lagoons. But it is certain that these boats were unlike the modern gondola. More probably they resembled the light boats with pointed bows which the Venetians call *barchette.* The word 'gondola' does not occur till the twelfth century, and then not at Venice, but at Avignon. The derivation of the name is still an open question. But the view which has obtained most general acceptance is that which connects the word with the Latin *cymba* and Greek *κυμβή*, the light boat in which Charon ferried souls across the Styx. Charon's boat, as it is represented on gems and marbles, resembles the *barchetta,* and Charon himself uses a paddle to guide his boat behind. To this day, the passenger across a Venetian ferry lays his obol on the gunwale of the gondola, much as Charon's ghostly fares were wont to do.

The word 'gondola' occurs for the first time as the name of a Venetian boat in the ancient *Chronicle of Altino* (cir. 1200), where we learn that the Patriarch

of Grado enjoyed all the rights of shooting and fishing in the lagoons beyond Torcello, and the inhabitants were bound to furnish him with boats and 'gondolas.' 'Gondola,' therefore, was probably the generic Venetian name for all boats of the *barchetta* build, and remained attached to that particular *barchetta* form which subsequently emerged as the modern gondola. With the help of illuminated manuscripts, designs and plans of Venice, engravings and pictures, we can trace the development of the *barchetta* into the gondola.

The earliest picture of a gondola, or rather of a *barchetta*, from which I believe the gondola to be developed, dates, as far as I am aware, from the fifteenth century only. Yet the boat there represented is so simple in construction, that we may take it for certain that it has varied very slightly from its most primitive form. The picture is to be found as an illustration to a manuscript legend of Saint Peter and Saint Andrew. Saint Peter is trying to walk to shore, and Saint Andrew remains in his boat, a light skiff, rising at the bow and stern, of perfectly simple structure, without any *ferri* and possessing one *forcola* only. There is a touch of reality about this little picture which proves it to have been drawn by some one who knew the gondola, and gives it the value of true observation; for Saint Andrew, in horror at his companion's rashness, has clasped his hands and unshipped his oar, unshipping it exactly as a modern



EARLY FORMS OF THE GONDOLA

gondolier would do, by taking it out of the *forcola* and allowing the blade to trail flat upon the water. The precise date of this illumination is not known, but it must belong to the beginning of the fifteenth century.

The next illustration of a gondola which we have bears the date of 1480. It is reproduced on page 69. Then in a view of Venice attached to Breydenbach's 'Peregrinatio ad Sanctum Sepulcrum,' we see a gondola represented, of the same construction as that in the illumination, only in this case there are two rowers and therefore two *forcole*, though the German landsman has naïvely placed them both on the same side, thereby shaking our confidence in his powers of observation. This gondola has no *ferri*, but it has a rudimentary *felze*, an arched covering of cloth supported on four sticks and leaving all the sides open. If we can trust Breydenbach's view on such a minute point, we at once find the reason why these early gondolas had no *ferri*, and at the same time we learn the exact value and meaning of the common word *approdare*, to land; for here we see that all the gondolas come to shore prow foremost, and that the passenger embarks by the bows, which the modern *ferro* would not allow him to do.

Breydenbach's picture is confirmed by the magnificent plan of Venice attributed to Albert Dürer, bearing date 'MD.,' which shows us a gondola of exactly similar construction, and with the same

rudiments of the *felze*. At the close of the fifteenth century the gondola had reached this stage of its development: it was a light, short boat, with no ornament or *ferri*, and possessing only the most primitive *felze*; it was usually rowed by one man only, and two gondoliers, if they were ever used, were a sign of unwonted splendour and luxury.

The next two centuries, the sixteenth and seventeenth, were the great period of Venetian magnificence and pomp; and the gondola shared in the national movement. For this period we have abundant documents in the pictures of the Academy and of the ducal palace. The pictures of Carpaccio and Bellini, belonging partly to the close of the fifteenth century, show us Venice in its ceremonial aspect; and from them we learn the point where the sumptuous development of the gondola was about to begin. In the pictures of these masters, the boat still retains the simple original form of a *barchetta*; but the *felzi* have become much richer in material and in workmanship. They are covered with fine stuffs embroidered in patterns of bright colours, though still open on all sides and giving shelter above only. The adornment of the *felze* was the point of departure for that excessive luxury which gave rise to so many abortive sumptuary laws. But the Government itself led the way in this extravagance by spending large sums on the fittings of a gondola and its *felze*, which they sent as a present to the King of Portugal in the year 1501.

At the close of that same century and the opening of the next, the form of the gondola underwent a great change, and approached, for the first time, to the character it at present possesses. The massive steel *ferro*, with all its armament of teeth, was added at a bound. There is a curious engraving in Franco's rare book, *Habiti d'Huomeni et Donne Venetiane*, of the year 1580, which bears for title, 'This is the way the bride goes in her gondola,' and shows us a wedding party crossing the lagoons. The gondolas of the bride and her suite have a *ferro* at the stern and a *ferro* at the bows; and the stern *ferro* remained in use for a whole century, after which it was exchanged for the simple steel band which now prevails.

Various reasons have been suggested to explain the adoption of the *ferro*; none, however, seems satisfactory. It is said that the *ferro* was introduced as a measure to allow a gondolier to judge whether he could pass under any particular bridge; if his *ferro* passed, then he knew that his gondola with its *felze* could also pass. Others maintain that the *ferro* at the bow acted as a counter-weight to the rower behind; but this theory is destroyed by the fact that the earliest *ferri* were attached to both bow and stern, leaving the balance of the boat just where it was. Much more probably the *ferri* were added for ornament and nothing more.

Another remarkable change in the gondola of

1580 is the further growth of the *felze* in size and splendour. The *felze* of the bride's gondola, in this same engraving by Franco, is wrought in silk with heavy fringes, and is closed on either side; the seat, too, which in Bellini's time was a hard-backed, or backless, bench, has now become a cushioned lounge, not far removed in comfort from the downy softness of a modern *stramazzetto*. The *felzi* did not as yet possess a door; nor were they closed in behind, as are the *felzi* of to-day. But the *baticopo*, or long pall of cloth, which fell from the top of the *felze* behind, and so, in a manner, closed it, was already in use.

The frequent decrees of the *Proveditori alle pompe*, the sumptuary magistrates, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, continually disregarded and continually repeated, serve best to illustrate the extent to which luxury in the adornment of the gondola was carried. The series opens with an order forbidding the use of colour in the coverings of the *felzi*. All *felzi* are to be draped in coarse black woollen stuff; fine cloth, silk, fringes, and hangings are declared illegal. All carving, gilding, inlaying with ebony, ivory, or precious wood is forbidden; all steel and metal work must be perfectly plain—neither carved, chased, nor wrought in any fashion. The Government experienced the greatest difficulty in enforcing these regulations, for the nobles were bitten by a mania for display, and were always ready to surpass their neighbours in splendour on the slightest

pretext, and as occasion offered. One result, however, of these laws remains to this day in the sombre black which universally characterises the gondola.

The foreign ambassadors alone were exempt from the stringent decrees against colour and decoration; and they availed themselves of their privilege. Each ambassador, when he first came to Venice, sought not merely to outdo his predecessor, but to eclipse the representatives of other courts. The ambassador of France in the year 1672, the Count d'Avaux, shall speak for himself. In a despatch to his master, Louis XIV., he thus describes his entry into Venice: 'As for my gondolas,' he says, 'since I must mention them, for the gondolas here are a part of the embassy, I have to inform you that instead of a *felze* of black velvet with gold fringes in my first gondola, and a *felze* with silk fringes in the second, I put the *felze* of black velvet in the second, and a *felze* of damask in the third, and for the first gondola I have invented something new by using a *felze* of azure velvet wrought with fleurs-de-lys in embroidery, and by covering the seats with the same velvet and gold fringes, the finest I could procure. I desired also to have four gondoliers, though hitherto the ambassadors have used three only.' But M. d'Avaux, for all his pains, was surpassed by M. Amelot, who represented France at the ducal palace ten years later, in 1682. 'Of the five gondolas of the ambassador, the first and second were all of gilded carving, enriched by a great

A MODERN GONDOLA

number of figures and reliefs. The *felzi* and all the furnishings inside, the carpets and seats, were of crimson velvet for the first, and azure velvet for the second, embroidered with gold in a very beautiful pattern. The remaining gondolas were likewise enriched with figures and ornaments in black and gold, and hung with damask.' These ambassadorial entries were among the most magnificent of those spectacles on which the sea city prided herself; and we may imagine how the pleasure-loving people of Venice delighted in the show.

It was only in the eighteenth century that the gondola underwent its final modifications and assumed that form which it now possesses. By the middle of that century the vessel's career of development came to a close; and the gondolas of Guardi's pictures are exactly like the gondolas of to-day. The *ferro* at the stern has disappeared; that on the bow is no longer a round club of steel, but has been broadened into the hatchet-head of the modern boat. The whole gondola has been lengthened to gain speed; and the *felze* has received its door and glass windows. In short, the type of the gondola was fixed by the year 1740; and only one part of the furnishings remained to be added in the present century—the *tenda*, with its curtains and hangings of cream-coloured canvas, sometimes lined with blue for greater luxury.

What further touch of refinement or of comfort

the ingenuity of the gondoliers may hit upon, before the gondola disappears for ever, it is hard to foresee. Thanks to its ancient birth, its slow development, and the loving care which has always tended it, the gondola seems to have achieved the position of the most perfect carriage in the world.

# THE TRAGHETTI

THE *traghetti* of Venice, the ferries that cross the Grand Canal, or ply from point to point on the Giudecca, are a feature no less peculiar to the city than are the gondolas themselves, and they are quite as ancient. There are as many as sixteen of these ferries across the Grand Canal and the Giudecca; and each of them has its own history, its own archives and documents. For from its foundation each *traghetto* was a guild, a close corporation with a limited number of members, with its own particular rules, or *mariegole*, inscribed on parchment in Gothic characters, and adorned with capitals painted in vermilion, and here and there an illuminated page showing the patron saint of the *traghetto*, or the Assumption of Madonna into heaven. The *mariegole* of the various *traghetti*, in their old Venetian bindings of morocco and gold, may still be seen in the archives of the Frari; and a singular fascination attaches to the ancient, time-stained parchment which contains the history of that system of self-government which was developed by the gondoliers during five centuries of Venetian story, and whose rules are expressed in

rich and vigorous dialect. The earliest of these *mariegole* belongs to the *traghetto* of Santa Sofia, near the Rialto, and dates from the year 1344; the *traghetto* itself, however, was probably much older. Yet the same regulations and customs which governed the gondoliers in the fourteenth century hold good in the nineteenth. A *traghetto* of to-day closely resembles a *traghetto* of 1300, though the years have overlaid its lines with dust; it is still a corporation, with property and endowments of its own; the same officers, under the same titles, still keep order among the brothers; only the whole institution has a somewhat ancient air, is marred by symptoms of decay, and we fear that it may not last much longer. Indeed, the history and internal arrangement of the *traghetti* offer the best example of that which makes the subject of gondolier life interesting to the student of antiquity; for the *traghetti* are, in fact, a genuine part of the Venetian Republic imbedded in united Italy—a fossil survival unique in the history of the country, and perhaps in that of the world.

The date at which the first *traghetto* was established—that is, when the gondoliers plying for hire first formed themselves into a guild at their ferry—is not known; but such a guild was certainly in existence before the middle of the fourteenth century. A corporation of this nature was called a *scuola* at Venice; and from the very first these schools of the gondoliers were of a religious character, dedicated to

a patron saint, and in close connection with the church of the parish where the ferry was situated. This is the way in which the *scuola* of Santa Maria Zobenigo opens its book of rules: 'In the name of God, the Eternal Father, and of His Son Misser Jesu Cristo, and of His glorious mother, the Virgin Mary, and of the thrice-blessed patron Misser San Marco, and of Misser San Gregorio, who are the guardians of us the boatmen at the *traghetto* of San Gregorio and Santa Maria Zobenigo; may they help each and all of us brothers to live in fear of the Lord God and with peace and brotherly love between us, first in health and prosperity and then to salvation of our souls and the remission of our sins.' And in their parish church the brothers of each *scuola* had a special place appointed for them, usually under the organ, where they sat in a body on Sundays, their officers at the head of each bench. The first section of the rules which governed the schools invariably applies to Church observances: 'The school pledges itself to keep a lamp burning day and night before the altar. . . . Every second Sunday in the month they shall cause a solemn Mass to be sung. . . . Every Monday an ordinary Mass. . . . Every brother shall be obliged to confess twice a year, or at least once,' and if, after a warning, he remain impenitent, he shall be expelled. A brother who made the pilgrimage to Loretto, for the good of his soul, or of his body, was entitled to one centesimo a day while his journey lasted. 'Those

brothers who continue to live publicly in any deadly sin, shall be admonished, and expelled unless they amend.' The fines for disobedience and quarrelsomeness were 'applicate alla Madonna,' that is, they formed a fund for keeping an oil-lamp burning at the shrine of the Madonna, 'par luminar la Madonna.' And the first fare taken at the *traghetto* each morning was dedicated to the same purpose, and was called the 'parada della Madonna.'

But these schools were not founded for pious purposes solely. They were, in fact, benefit societies composed of the gondoliers at each *traghetto*, their wives and sisters, and, sometimes, a certain number of poor belonging to the parish. The benefits which the members obtained in return for their subscription may be gathered from the second section of the *mariegole*, which indicates the duties of the school. 'Of visiting the sick' is the first. The chief officer of the school, the *gastaldo*, was bound to visit each sick brother; and in any case where illness lasted more than three days, the sick man was entitled to a small sum daily from the funds. 'Of watching by the sick:' each brother might claim a fitting number of watchers by his deathbed. Any member whose estate could not bear the expenses of his funeral was buried at the charges of the school. The school was bound to send the proper number of torches to the funeral of any brother who died out of the parish; and if he died in the parish the whole fraternity attended, with their

cross and banner. The obligation of one brother to another endured beyond the limits of Venice; and each member had a claim upon the purse and the assistance of every other member, wherever they might meet, the school pledging itself to make good the loan to the lender, up to a certain point.

The last duty of a school was to keep order among its members and to guarantee their conduct as good citizens, while it protected their interests. 'If any quarrel shall arise between the brothers,' so run the rules, 'within eight days of being admonished they must make peace together. . . . If any member do or consent to any act hostile to the honour of the Venetian State, or of Misser the Doge, he shall be denounced and expelled. . . . Those who play the game of dice must abandon it within a month of being warned. . . . If any one be insolent to the Gastaldo he shall at once be expelled. . . . No one may speak in chapter without the Gastaldo's consent; nor may the Gastaldo suffer any one to speak except to the point. . . . Those who disobey the orders of the school, with them shall the school be at enmity in life and in death. . . . He who shall compass the destruction of the school, he has God the Father omnipotent and the Holy Spirit against him; and may he be given into the pit of Hell with Judas the traitor.'

So far for the maintenance of order; while, for purposes of self-defence, a corporation, with funds, organisation, and representatives, all recognised by

the Government, could act much more effectively in the protection of its corporate interests than a private individual was able to do. There are instances of a *traghetto* appealing to the Supreme Court from the adverse decision of a lower magistracy, and winning its case.

The advantages conferred by these schools were so considerable and so obvious, that not only did every *traghetto* establish one, but other classes of boatmen—the *burchieri*, or bargees, for example—applied for leave to found a school. The petition of the *burchieri* is a curious document. It is addressed to the Council of Ten, and sets forth 'that this glorious lagoon is constantly in need of dredging, and should your excellencies grant our prayer, you will always have barges at your disposal for this purpose. Moreover, if we be allowed to found a school, we shall put an end to the dirt and noise on the Grand Canal, under your windows. And we promise to pay eighty ducats, yearly, to the Water Commissioners. And on the festival of the Ascension we will make a triumph with our barges, to accompany the Doge when he goes to wed the sea.'

There is a fact about the nationality of the gondoliers in the fifteenth century which is worth noticing in passing. From the lists of the members of each *traghetto* it appears that less than half were natives of Venice. Some hail from Treviso, from Ravenna, Padua, Bergamo, Brescia, or Vicenza; very many

from Salò, on the lake of Garda; but by far the largest number come from the Dalmatian coast, from Sebenico, Zara, Segna, Traü, Spalato. A century later these foreign names had disappeared. The gondoliers had either become, for the most part, Venetians proper, or, more probably, the foreign names had been dropped, as the families took root in their new home. However that may be, the men who first established these schools, with their admirable system of government, were chiefly foreigners and not Venetians. In fact, the citizens of Venice ceased to be sailors early in their history. At the present day the crews of the trading ships are all drawn from Chioggia, Pelestrina, and Burano, or else from the Istrian and Dalmatian coast; and in early times the Venetians produced great shipowners and sea captains, but they rarely manned either their merchantmen or their war-galleys.

Every gondolier who worked at a *traghetto* belonged, *ipso facto*, to the *scuola* of that *traghetto*; and his title was *barcariol del traghetto*, to distinguish him from his natural enemy the *barcariol toso*, or loose gondolier, who went about poaching on the confines of the various ferries, and stealing a fare whenever he could. The Venetian administration desired that the gondoliers of the *traghetti* should be, as far as possible, a self-governing body, subject only to the occasional supervision of a Government department. The departments responsible for the regulation of the

gondoliers varied at different epochs. For example, the *traghetti* were originally under the magistracy of the Giustitia Vecchia; that was superseded by the Proveditori di Comun; then, in virtue of the law which rendered all the *traghetti* liable to supply men for service in the navy, the college of the Milizia da Mar obtained a concurrent voice in the government of the gondoliers. The disorders which followed on the disastrous League of Cambray necessitated a special commission to revise all arts and trades, including that of gondolier; and when that commission was withdrawn, the Censors were intrusted with the maintenance of order at the *traghetti*.

The form of government which the schools adopted under the sanction of the Venetian authorities, was the same at all the *traghetti*. The whole body of brothers composed the chapter of the school, which was supreme. The chapter held its meetings in the church of the patron saint, and on that saint's festival it elected its officers for the year. From the chapter the officers received their instructions as to the application of the guild property; and it was the chapter which decided all questions touching the existence or well-being of the corporation. The chief officer, the *gastaldo*, was the official representative of the school, recognised by the Government, and held responsible by them for the good behaviour of the brothers and for the payment of all Government taxes. The *gastaldo* presided at the chapter; and together

with the two *compagni* and the *scrivano*, or secretary, who were elected at the same time as himself, he kept all the accounts, and disbursed all moneys in the name of the school. By the laws of the fraternity he was bound to balance the books and to go through the inventory of the school property once every month. The office of *gastaldo* lasted one year; and three years had to elapse before a gondolier who had been a *gastaldo* was re-eligible for the post. In the early life of the schools the office of *gastaldo* was sought and prized. But the law which made the *gastaldi* responsible for the taxes of their respective *traghetti*, combined with the disorder and poverty which came upon the *traghetti* during the sixteenth century, rendered the post more onerous than agreeable: and the gondoliers adopted every device to avoid election, or, if elected, they left their ferry and took to hiding for their year of office. Matters reached such a pass that the Government was obliged to fine any gondolier who refused to serve; and if he left his *traghetto* after his election, he thereby forfeited his licence to ply as gondolier.

The *gastaldo* was the chief officer of the guild, and as councillors he had two *compagni*, and, later on, two *sindici*. These five men formed the executive, and were called the *bancali*, from the *banca* or cross bench on which they sat when the fraternity met in chapter. All cases of disorder or disobedience among the members came before the *bancali*, and were tried

by them. And very hard work they found it to keep order among the younger gondoliers, who were always behaving 'with little fear of God or of the world,' as their elders phrase it. In any extreme case where their authority was defied, the *bancali* could always appeal to the Government for support, and the result was the arrest and imprisonment of the offender. For example, the *bancali* of Santa Sofia, in the year 1518, applied for power to fine their troublesome lads. Their petition runs thus: 'In the name of God and of our Lady, and of Misser San Marco, chief and governor of this thrice noble city, the which may God preserve and maintain by sea and land, and in the name of our protector, Misser San Zuan, chief and patron of this our blessed guild, which belongs to the men of the *traghetto* of Santa Sofia. Seeing that there is great riot among us boatmen, and seeing that the *banca* has endeavoured to provide for the abatement of the said errors and misdeeds, we pray you now to make provision for these disorders by proclamation of imprisonment and fine, because there are come among us some who have bought their liberties at this *traghetto*, and who have become lions of San Donà, so that neither young nor old can live by reason of their threatenings and their readiness to break the heads and arms of old and young, of passengers and even of foreigners who come to give us the hire whereby we live.' Recourse to the Government, however, was seldom adopted, for it was

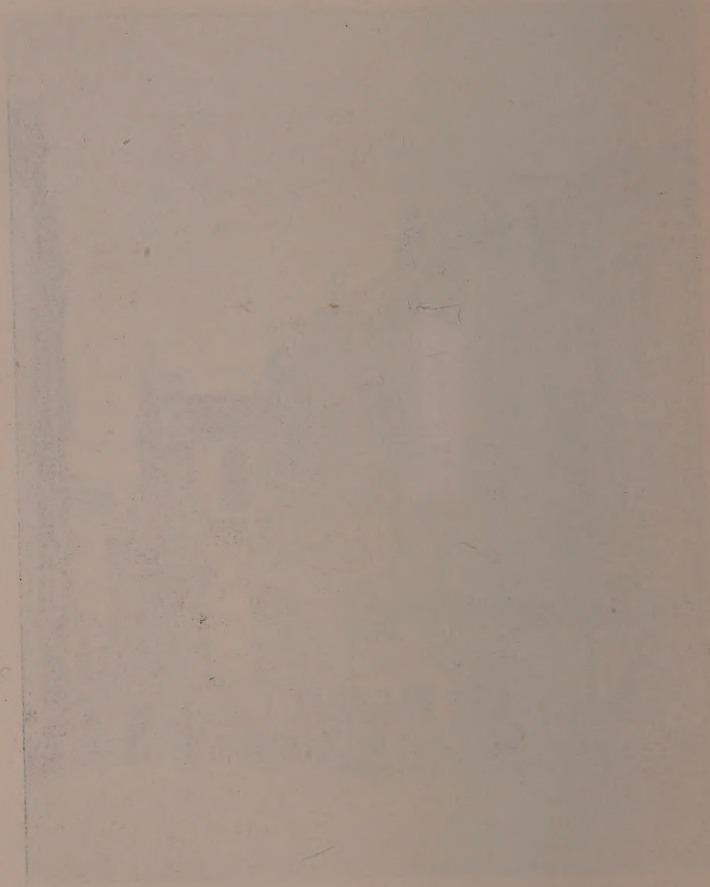
naturally unpopular; and the *mariegole* of the schools gave their *bancali* sufficient powers in the way of fines, suspension, or expulsion to enable them to keep order.

Under the *bancali* came the six deacons for the men and six deaconesses for the women. These deacons divided all the non-official members of the school into six companies, each with a deacon at its head. The duties of the deacons were to attend the sick, to arrange the funerals of the dead, and to answer to the *gastaldo* for the subscriptions and the taxes of their respective companies.

The government of the school, then, was composed of the *bancali* and the deacons. The election of new members took place in chapter and by ballot of the whole school, the *bancali* presiding. The entrance fee was fixed by law, in the year 1461, at one ducat; but this sum was steadily, though illegally, increased, till in the year 1774 it amounted to five ducats or thirty-one lire. Besides the entrance fee, custom required the new member to give a breakfast and a dinner to the brothers of the *traghetto*; and under this heading the school made larger and larger demands, mounting from two ducats to as much as ten. The entrance fees and the yearly subscriptions formed the fixed revenue of the school. But there was a method by which the brothers could raise an extra sum of money for any special expenses, such as the repair of the landing-places, or to meet extraordinary taxes, such as that imposed on the *traghetti* for the support of the

fugitive nuns of Candia. The method was to let certain extra places at the *traghetto* over and above the number which was fixed by law. To do this the *traghetto* had to obtain a special leave from the Government. This is the petition of the gondoliers of Santa Sofia, in the year 1537, addressed to the Proveditori di Comun: 'Most illustrious Proveditori, it is as easy for us poor gondoliers of Santa Sofia to supply the Government with ten men for the navy at such excessive cost, as it is to fly to heaven. For we have many old men at our *traghetto* who, seeing that the taxes are so heavy, and that they live only by letting their place on the *traghetto*, can scarcely keep soul and body together for themselves and their poor families. We therefore beg your leave to let three more boats on our *traghetto*. The revenue from these to be applied to furnishing ten men for the navy. These three newcomers to be over and above our full complement of forty, but to take the place of the first three who die, so that the *traghetto* may return to its ordinary number. We are very poor, and have only fifteen sound men who can pay all their dues. The rest are either sickly or old.' The revenue which the *traghetti* derived from the sale of these extra places—liberties, as they were called—varied with the goodness of the ferry itself—that is, with the amount of traffic that passed over it—and also with the condition of the city at the time; war, plague, and heavy taxes always reduced the sum paid for a liberty. But,

TRAGHETTO OF SANTA MARIA ZOBENIGO



allowing all weight to these considerations, the differences were surprisingly great. For example, at Santa Maria Zobenigo, in the year 1618, a liberty sold for one hundred and ninety-five ducats, while at Santa Lucia, at the same date, the price was only seventy-three ducats, and at the Piazzetta only ten ducats. And again, as illustrating the variations at the same *traghetto*, the highest price paid for a liberty at Santa Maria Zobenigo was three hundred and twenty-four ducats; the lowest, during the great plague of 1631, seventy-one ducats.

The *scuole*, it is true, exist no longer in all their clearly defined constitution; the passage of time has broken down this structure of the early gondoliers. But the *traghetti* still survive, and each is governed by its ancient officials, its *gastaldo* and *bancali*. The *bancali* are still responsible for the good order of the men; they arrange the rotations of service; they see to the cleanness and safety of the landing-places; they retain their powers of trying, fining, or suspending a refractory brother; if the city authorities have any orders to issue, they communicate with the *gastaldo* and *bancali*; these officers are a true survival from the fourteenth century, with their duties, character, and powers undiminished by the lapse of years. And the arrangements which these officers made of old for the good government of their *traghetti* retain their force in the Venice of to-day. In no profession are antique words more frequently to be found than in

that of gondolier; the customs and phrases of their trade seem to have become hereditary in the blood of the boatmen, though it is only when modern regulations are imposed upon them that the men discover how deeply seated is their attachment to their ancient art.

The arrangements of the *traghetti* are simple and efficient to maintain order; for though the noise is often great, and a stranger might well believe that the men spent the larger part of their time in quarrelling, yet, as a matter of fact, a serious quarrel between two brothers, while on duty, rarely occurs. The internal arrangements of a *traghetto* will be most easily understood by taking a typical instance, the *traghetto* of Santa Maria Zobenigo. Each *traghetto* will present slight variations upon its neighbours; but the general scheme of arrangement is the same at all. The *traghetto* of Santa Maria Zobenigo has one other *traghetto*, that of San Maurizio, and one station, that of the Ponte delle Ostreghe, attached to it, and worked by the men of Santa Maria. Besides serving these three posts, the gondoliers have duty at the neighbouring hotel; and lastly there is the *patula*, or night service, which will be explained presently. All the members of the *traghetto*, forty-two in all, are divided into six companies, each of which works in rotation as follows:—One day at San Maurizio, one day at Santa Maria Zobenigo, one day at the Ponte delle Ostreghe; then come the two most

important and profitable days for work, at the hotel, *alla Locanda*, and the *patula*. One of the companies is on duty at the hotel each day, and the men answer in turn to the hotel porter's summons of *poppe a uno* or *a due*, as one or two rowers are required. It is well to remember that, should one wish to secure a particular gondolier, he must be called by his number; the rules of the *traghetto* forbid him to answer to his name. After the service at the hotel comes the *patula*, or service of twenty-four hours at the principal ferry. The fare for the *parada*, or passage, from one side to the other, is five centesimi during the day, and ten after the great bell of Saint Mark's has sounded at evening. The reason why this service of the *patula* is so profitable is the following: the service lasts from nine A.M. till the following nine A.M.; at four P.M. all the men, except those belonging to the company on duty, leave the *traghetto*, thus reducing the numbers to a sixth, and increasing the gains. From four P.M. till nine A.M. the men on the *patula* have the ferry all to themselves, and take all the hire that comes, both for services of an hour or more, as well as the fares for the *parada*, the only restriction being that the ferry must never be left with less than two men to attend to it. Their dinner is brought down to the ferry by the gondoliers' wives or children, and, in the summer, one may often see a whole family party supping together in the bows of a gondola. In the hot weather the men sleep in their gondolas, and

in winter as many of them as can find room crowd into the little wooden hut which stands at the *traghetto*—the only remnant now of their chapter-house—where the *bancali* meet to settle the affairs of the fraternity. Sometimes the men on the *patula* club together, and divide the whole gains for the night in equal portions; sometimes each works on his own account.

The ordinary profits of the *traghetto* used formerly to be so great that the gondoliers neglected the service of the *patula*, preferring to spend their nights at home, or in the wine-shop. But now a gondolier will tell you that his largest permanent gains each week come from the *patula*. At nine A.M. those who have been on the *patula* the previous night leave the *traghetto* for the whole of that day. This rotation of six days, three at the three posts, one at the hotel, one on the *patula*, and one off-day, makes up the diurnal life of the gondolier, unless he should be fortunate enough to have found a *padrone*, in which case he is free from all the rules and service of the *traghetto*. While on duty at the ferry a few excellent regulations suffice to keep order among the men. Those on duty are arranged numerically, and, when a passenger comes to the ferry, no one may call to him but the gondolier whose turn it is; the only exception to this rule being that, if a friar wishes to cross the ferry, the boat last in the order is bound to serve him, and for nothing. This custom is, however, falling

into disuse. No gondolier on duty may tie his boat to the *pali*, or posts, of the *traghetto*, nor may he wash his boat in *cavana*, the spaces between the posts where the gondolas' bows run in. While on service he is forbidden to go to the wine-shops; if he does he loses his turn, and when he comes back he takes his place last on the list.

The Government of Venice hoped to maintain their control over the guilds of the gondoliers through the officials of the guilds themselves, the *gastaldi* and *bancali*. But the task was by no means easy, for the *gastaldi* invariably took the part of their brothers, and helped them to avoid taxation and military service; while any pressure brought to bear on the officials of the *traghetto* only made the gondoliers more unwilling to accept office, and more irritable when driven to do so.

But the chief difficulty and danger which menaced the schools arose from inside. The history of their decay and collapse, which we have now to follow, is a history of disintegration wrought from inside, not of attacks directed against the corporations from without. The selfishness and shortsighted stupidity of the gondoliers themselves brought about the destruction of their schools.

Whenever the *traghetti* became close corporations, the principal object of those inside was to exclude all others, and to reduce their own numbers, so that their individual gains might be the greater. Instead of

endeavouring to maintain their *traghetti* at a high state of efficiency by the gradual admission of new blood and young men, the original members thought solely of their own pockets, without any regard for their corporate existence. For example, the *traghetto* of Santa Maria Zobenigo entered among its earliest rules this, that no gondolier should be eligible who was not fifty years of age, and who could not prove six or seven years' continuous service in some private family; and the *gastaldo* assured the Government that it was only on these conditions that the *bancali* could guarantee the safety of its passengers. At the same time the *bancali* succeeded in reducing the number of gondoliers at the *traghetto* from forty to twenty-eight. The result of this selfish and exclusive policy was, as we have seen, that certain *traghetti* were unable to furnish men for the navy, as they had 'only fifteen sound members' out of a complement of forty; and an abuse of this crying nature compelled the Government to intervene in the management of the schools.

A most serious difficulty, however, in the regulation of the *traghetti* was that which turned on the question of 'liberties,' or licences to row. Indeed, the whole history of the decline of the schools of the gondoliers centres round this point of the 'liberties.' The question of the 'liberties' resolved itself into two subsidiary questions: who was the original owner of the 'liberties'—the school or the Government? and

if the 'liberties' belonged to the school, did the school hold them in its corporate capacity, or was each member the owner of his 'liberty'? and if so, for how long—for life, or in perpetuity? One question was between the Government and the school, the other between the school and its own members, who claimed to be not merely lessees, but actual proprietors of the 'liberties' which they had bought.

There is very little doubt that, originally, the owners of the 'liberties' at a *traghetto* were the members of that *traghetto*; and the Government virtually acknowledged the fact; for in many early decrees of the Proveditori di Comun, those magistrates distinctly allowed the full right of the brothers to elect new members in the place of those who died, or to permit a brother to transfer his 'liberty,' with the sanction of his colleagues, to a man who was not at the time a member of the *traghetto*, with this limitation, that the statutory number of members must not be exceeded. The Government reserved to itself the power of ratification, and nothing more. The name of a new member, after being balloted and accepted, was submitted to the Proveditori, and the election countersigned. And if any doubt on the point remained, it would be dispelled by the case of Santa Maria Zobenigo against the Proveditori, in the year 1514. The Proveditori at that date put in a claim that the vacant 'liberties' should be filled alternately by the *scuola* and their own office. The *gastaldo* of the

*traghetto* took the opinion of the Court of Avogadori, by means of counsel; and, having proved a scriptory and prescriptive right to elect the members of the fraternity, the *traghetto* obtained a decree in its favour, which was confirmed by the Council of Ten.

The *traghetti* as corporations enjoyed a very strong position; but the rapacity which governed their action was destructive of their cause—it ruined their autonomy, and compelled the Government to interfere. For, as 'liberties' fell vacant, the *gastaldi* neglected to fill them up, as they were bound to do, thinking that the fewer there were at each *traghetto* the greater the gains of each individual. This remissness gave rise to serious disorders, and furnished the Proveditori with a pretext for issuing a decree which compelled the *gastaldi* to report each vacancy within three days of its occurrence; and if this were neglected, the right to fill up the vacancy lapsed to the Proveditori, who were then entitled to put in a gondolier who should be free of all charges to the school, except his yearly subscription. This was the thin end of the wedge; and from this point forwards the Government gradually assumed a more direct control over the 'liberties,' being forced to do so by the carelessness of the gondoliers themselves.

There remained the further question of the nature of the gondolier's property in the 'liberty' which he had obtained from the *traghetto*. And here, again, the action of the men themselves ruined their schools.

When the schools had established their property in their 'liberties' as a corporation, each individual of the corporation endeavoured to establish his property in his own 'liberty'; and he met with little opposition from his brother gondoliers, who were all bent on the same result as himself. A father found no difficulty in passing his 'liberty' on to his son, or his nephew; election by the school was a mere formality in such cases. But more than this; the gondoliers took to selling their 'liberties' to private individuals outside the school, and even outside the profession, though the name of the original owner remained on the books, to mislead the Government. And in this way it came to pass that, in the year 1530, the real holders of 'liberties,' in a large number of cases, were 'foreigners, masons, dyers, bootmakers, priests, gentlemen and women.' Of course, this miscellaneous crowd did not themselves work at the *traghetto*, but let their 'liberties' to any one who would pay for them—children of ten, young men of riotous lives, broken-down soldiers who had never touched an oar. The consequences of this disintegration were inevitable. The *gastaldi* found themselves quite unable to govern these men, over whom they had no real hold, who belonged neither to the quarter nor to the school. The scandals and disorders wrought by these lessees of 'liberties' brought about the final ruin of the schools as proprietors of the 'liberties' at their *traghetti*.

The Government were compelled to take notice of

the dangerous condition of the *traghetti* in the year 1530, and found themselves obliged to interfere. They set forth their reasons for doing so in language at once forcible and picturesque. 'It is these lessees, these *tosi affituali*, who work all the mischief at the *traghetti*, who demand excessive fares, and who use all sorts of insolence to Venetians and foreigners alike, because they do not belong to the *traghetto*, and therefore have no dread of being expelled; but as soon as any difficulty arises, they leave the ferry, and are off wherever they choose. The larger number of them have neither wife, nor child, nor settled home, but live like the birds in the branches who have their home over their heads.' To put an end, therefore, to such irregularities, no gondolier for the future shall be allowed to let his 'liberty'; and he never possessed the right to sell it, for it was not his property, but the property of his school. The only exceptions to this rule are in favour of the old and infirm, and of those men who are drawn for service in the navy. In both these cases the holders of the 'liberty' may put a substitute in his place; but this substitute must be over twenty, a proved oarsman and of quiet habits. The women who hold 'liberties' must resign them at once, in favour of young men over twenty; the choice of these men must be made within two months, otherwise all rights over the 'liberties' will lapse.

But these regulations, which the Government hoped would be sufficient, failed to produce their effect.

The confusion into which the books and registers of the *traghetti* had been allowed to fall, and the impossibility, in many cases, of discovering the real holders of a 'liberty,' which often stood in the name of a dead man, rendered the efforts of the Government abortive. The disorders continued and increased; the *tosi* took to robbing the schools, and carried off the crosses, the votive offerings and ornaments which hung before the Madonna's shrine. The *traghetti* became dangerous to peaceful passengers, for the young ruffians armed themselves, and exacted their fares by threats, or compelled the citizens to pay, *a modo loro*, by driving them forcibly on board their gondolas, taking them into the mid canal and feigning to upset the boat, until the soldi were forthcoming. The *gastaldi* were helpless, and found themselves between the anvil and the hammer; for the Government still held them responsible for order, which they could not maintain. Fines and punishments inflicted on the *gastaldi* only called forth lamentable confessions of impotence. 'The lads at the *traghetti*,' they say, 'who lead ribald and scandalous lives are protected by their *padroni*, gentlemen of bad repute. If they are spoken to, they challenge to a duel.' It was the days of *bravi*, and these riotous young gondoliers were either *bravi* themselves, or knew how to find *bravi* among their friends, who would see them through their quarrels by the help of sword or dagger. 'But what is more

important than all,' continue the *gastaldi*, 'they will not be obedient to the company, nor will they keep the rules of our *mariegole*. And should any of us say to them that they ought to obey, and stand within the rules, they have the audacity and arrogance to abuse us and to give us vile language. And if we fine them some small amount of wax or oil, or other forfeit, to light the Madonna at our *traghetto*, and pay for our masses, they have the hardihood to say they will not pay. . . . They threaten us, and bring others of a vicious life down to the *traghetto* to threaten us. And, if we do not provide for this evil, we shall presently be at such a pass that we shall not know how to govern our *traghetto*.'

That pass had, however, long been reached. It was impossible that the situation should continue; and, at the opening of the seventeenth century, the Government was obliged to revolutionise the whole character of the *traghetti* by going to the root of the mischief, and taking away their property in the 'liberties.' Hitherto there had been five modes by which a man might become a member of a *traghetto*: either by election in chapter of the school; or by the renunciation of a brother in his favour; or by exchange between two members of different ferries; or by order of the Proveditori as filling a vacancy unfilled by the school; or by order of the Proveditori as a reward for good naval service. Now, all the 'liberties,' whenever they fell vacant, were put up to auction in

the office of the Milizia da Mar, and knocked down to the highest bidder. From this time forward, till the close of the Republic, purchase at auction from the Government became the only way in which a man could obtain a licence as gondolier. The Government undertook the supervision of the registers, and any 'liberty' that remained unoccupied through neglect, ill health, or death, was sold immediately.

Thus the *traghetti* lost the control over their 'liberties'; and with that control disappeared the most important part of their functions and powers as a corporation. From that date to this, the Government of the day has been the virtual owner of the 'liberties,' and the final resort in all questions affecting their management. Until quite recently a young gondolier might buy an old one out of his place at a good *traghetto*, for about three hundred lire; and the municipality readily sanctioned such exchanges. But the present town-council desire to put an end to this remnant of ancient privilege, and insist that they alone shall appoint or transfer, and that the gondoliers have no claim to initiative in the matter.

The regulations of the Government on the subject of 'liberties' restored comparative order to the *traghetti*, though they could not alter human nature, and we come across occasional outbursts of the riotous spirit among the young gondoliers, who still bullied their passengers, and exacted more than their due centesimi for the fare across the ferry. In the year 1702 the

Censors threaten the whip, and other tortures, for those who carry pistols or knives in their boats; and, as late as 1800, one Francesco Pelizzari distinguished himself by crowding twenty-nine unfortunate people into his gondola, and refused to land them till they had paid *a modo suo*. For this exploit, however, he was banished from Venice.

The corporate life of the *traghetti* was closed by the action of the Government in the sixteenth century. The schools survived, though with diminished vitality, until the extinction of the Republic; and even now certain of their functions are still performed by the modern *traghetti*. The *traghetti* are still friendly societies. A brother who falls ill receives a certain sum daily from the fraternity as long as his illness lasts; and the *gastaldo* and four brothers attend his funeral with torches, and accompany him to his last home at San Michele, when he dies. The *bancali* are still the recognised heads of the *traghetti*, and hold their sittings in the wooden shelter huts at each ferry's end. But this is all that remains of an institution which was once among the most remarkable and complete of those that flourished under the Venetian Republic.

# A GONDOLIERS' BANK

THE Venetians have always been bankers. As early as the twelfth century the nobles of Venice, like their neighbours of Florence, began to engage in private banking, and continued for four hundred years the greatest bankers in Europe. A series of Black Fridays, towards the close of the sixteenth century, put an end to most of the private houses, and the Government established a public bank in their place. But an instinct, so spontaneous as that of banking appears to be in the Italian temperament, cannot be wholly obliterated by the process of time. Among the people there still survives a vigorous system of traffic in money, conducted by themselves for themselves, and quite independent of any commercial movement in the great world.

The traditions and instincts of republican Venice endure with greatest tenacity among the gondoliers. They have always considered themselves a guild, and were once treated as such by their fellow-citizens, though they have now lost the formal recognition of that status which they used to possess. For centuries they have been accustomed to govern themselves.

They, more than any other institution of Venice, have successfully withstood the changes and chances of progress. It is among the gondoliers chiefly that this popular system of banking goes on ; hidden away from the knowledge of the stranger, who would hardly suspect that the tall grave rower behind him, silently urging his gondola out to the Lido or San Giorgio, was, in truth, a most capable financier. Yet, if some happy touch of sympathy or friendliness should loosen his tongue, he would have something to say about the society to which he belongs.

A bank is formed in this way. A company of thirty men—it rarely exceeds this number—come together. They are for the most part gondoliers and their friends among the small tradesmen, the owners of wine-shops and eating-houses. Each man pays a deposit of ten lire on the spot, and pledges himself to a weekly payment of one lira throughout the year. The hours for paying this weekly lira are from six to eight on the morning of each Monday ; and the fine for failure is ten per cent. per week for every lira that is missing. The company then proceeds to elect its officers. These are four in number—a controller-general, a secretary, a cashier, and an *esattore* whose duty it is to exact the fines. These officers are intrusted with the management of the bank, and they are paid in the following way. Each member is bound by the rules of the society to borrow from the bank at least one hundred and twenty lire,

in sums of any size he chooses, but the whole must amount to one hundred and twenty lire in the year. Upon this he pays ten per cent. interest—that is to say, twelve lire; and out of this sum, though not absorbing the whole of it, the salaries of the officers are defrayed. It might seem simpler for every member to pay down twelve lire at once towards the working of the bank. But, by the arrangement which they have established, each associate is entitled to the use of one hundred and twenty lire of ready money in times of pressure; whereas the poverty of his credit and the smallness of the sum would prevent him from borrowing of a banker, while his neighbours, who might be willing to lend, would ask more than ten per cent. interest.

The bank thus created proceeds to work in the following way. Loans are advanced to members only. Any member may borrow from the bank at the dictation of his needs, as long as it has capital available to lend. The terms upon which loans are advanced are these:—the sum borrowed must be paid back at the rate of ten per cent. per week, while ten per cent. is charged as interest upon the whole; therefore, in theory, every debt to the bank is repaid with its interest in eleven weeks, and all loans cease eleven weeks before the end of the financial year. But of course this rule cannot be always strictly observed, and the fine for a breach of it is ten per cent. upon whatever is wanting of that weekly instalment

which, if duly paid, would annihilate both debt and interest at the close of eleven weeks. The interest on loans and the two fines—the fine for the non-payment of the weekly lira, and the fine for failure to repay the instalment on the sum borrowed—form the profit of the bank, which is divided equally among the members at the close of each year, when the capital which each has invested, the ten-lire entrance fee and the fifty-two lire of weekly payments, is also returned. Each member of the company keeps a pass-book, in which he notes the sums he has borrowed and the dates and amount of his repayments. This pass-book is tallied weekly with the secretary's ledger. In this way a check is established upon the officers of the bank; and should any doubt as to their good faith arise, the members have only to meet, add up the sum in their various books, and they at once arrive at the actual position of the bank.

The system is obviously a strong inducement to thrift. The man who borrows no more than the obligatory one hundred and twenty lire in the course of the year can hardly fail to be the gainer. Even if the bank did no business at all, he could not lose more than twelve lire, which he pays towards the working of the company. But such a contingency never happens; and the gondoliers are willing to take whatever risk there may be. All of them expect to borrow; but they prefer to pay the interest of ten per cent. to the benefit of their friends rather than a

larger sum to shopkeepers for permission to run up a bill. In fact, each member of the bank is a ready-money man to the outside world. The gain to the thrifty is clear. It is harder to understand how the unthrifty ones find it to their advantage to pay so much as ten per cent. for their money. But, in the first place, they would find it difficult to get money cheaper. Then eleven weeks, the theoretical limit to their indebtedness, seems a very short time; and during that short time there is a constant jogging at their elbows to make them pay. No doubt many of them, who are not morally robust, rely upon this weekly pressure to keep them up to the mark of repayment. Indeed, the perils that threaten a defaulter are great enough to induce the most lazy to make an effort; for if at the end of the year a man is still indebted to the bank, he forfeits all claim on the general profits and loses the capital he has laid out in starting the bank. All these are inducements powerful enough to guarantee most men against a system of *laissez-faire* concerning their debts, and it is this which proves so ruinous to workmen who are living on their daily gains; but, beyond this, a member of one of these societies knows that, should the worst come to the worst, and the year's end find him still a debtor to the bank, his debts are cancelled on the winding-up of the company, and he is free, though irretrievably ruined in credit.

The bank lasts a year only—from September to

September. On the first of September the members meet, the accounts are presented by the officers and checked by a committee of non-official members, the profits are divided, the bank wound up, and the affair is over. But before separating the members usually proceed to the formation of a new company for the ensuing year. It is to be understood that this is an entirely fresh venture, and has no connection with any of its predecessors. Those of the old society who are willing, and are not defaulters, remain, and new names are submitted to the company. Should no objection be taken, these new members are accepted on probation for three weeks. On the 21st of September the new bank is definitely made up. Those of the probationers who have paid their lira weekly and regularly are enrolled in the society and undertake the conditions of the bank.

But business is not the only object, though the main one, which brings these men together. The members dine in company at least twice a year—once during the Carnival, and again on the winding-up of the bank. There is therefore every reason to choose a good fellow as a companion, and one who is well known. This acts indirectly as a guarantee that the new member will not prove a defaulter. These dinners are compulsory, and the fine for absence is three lire, which go to lessen the expenses of those who dine. Very jovial the company is—frank, friendly, and orderly. They

dine at great length, bestowing about three-quarters of an hour on each course; and after dinner, towards midnight, come the music and songs and dancing till six o'clock in the morning.

The gondoliers have the advantage of being an antique guild. They enjoy a long professional ancestry. The regulations of these banks are the result of a series of experiments, and an illustration of the *esprit de corps* which still vivifies their art, and has preserved it, hitherto, alone among the many institutions of the Venetian Republic.

# FLOODS IN THE CITY

THE sea and the wind are responsible for floods in the city. No doubt, before the rivers—the Piave, the Sile, and the Brenta—were canalised, and their mouths diverted from the lagoons into the open sea, a flood on the mainland would mean high-water in Venice; but now the principal author of a flood in the city is 'that son of a dog, the scirocco.' A heavy wind blowing up the Adriatic for two days, and sending a turbid sea rolling on the sands of the Lido, virtually blocks the mouths by which the tidal waters escape from the lagoons into the open. The down-going tide cannot pass out till it has lost its hour for falling, and begins to turn and rise again. Then it comes sweeping in before the wind, swirling round the point by Sant' Elena and the public gardens, streaming along the curve by the Riva degli Schiavoni, dividing at the point of the Dogana, where half the grey-green flood pours up the Grand Canal, and half fills the wider Giudecca from marge to marge.

The floods usually take place in the morning. As one opens the window, a blast of warm, moist

air streams into the room, wetting all the walls and standing in drops on the scagliola pavement; the air is thick and heavy, and charged with salt sea-spray; and far off, above the roofs of the houses, there reigns a continual booming noise, unremitting and impressive in its pervasiveness—it is the roar of the sea on the Lido, two miles or more away. Then the small canal below the window begins to feel the incoming tide. The chips of hay or of wood, the cabbage-stalks and scraps of old matting, move uneasily, as if in doubt which way they are to go; then, with a final turn on their pivots, they yield to the current and sweep away towards the Giudecca. The colour of the water changes to a pale pea-green, not quite clear, but looking as if it had come fresh from the sea. Steadily the tide flows faster and faster under the bridge, and the market-men and gondoliers secure their boats to the posts. So it goes on for an hour or more, till the jade-coloured flood has nearly brimmed to the edge of the *fondamenta*, but not yet overflowed it. Then the water begins to appear in the calle; it comes welling up through every drain-hole and between the flags of the pavement, bubbling like a little geyser and making a low, gurgling noise; for the sea begins to flood Venice under the pavements, and not over the *fondamente*, which are usually higher than the streets. Presently the baker puts out a board to serve as a bridge for his customers; but soon the

water from the canal has joined that in the calle; the bridge ceases to be of use, and floats idly away. Persistently the sea rises; it creeps under the large door of the palace, and swells the little pools that are bubbling up in the courtyard, and flows right out by the great gates on the Grand Canal, converting the whole cortile into a lake. Then the first boat passes down the calle, stopping at the shop doors to pick up fares; and bare-legged men offer their services as porters from the high bridge steps to the upper end of the street, which is still dry. Indeed, the flood is an excuse for the display of bare legs, and half the population of the quarter are tucked above the knee. All the windows are full of women and children, laughing at the traffic below—laughing at the thrifty, high-kilted housewife, out for her marketing, who grudges a centesimo for the boat and shrinks from the porterage; laughing at the thin-shod dandy, whose hat was blown off and umbrella turned inside out, and who looks disgust at the wind; laughing at the heavy man who nearly brings himself and his bearer prone upon the water. Then suddenly, without a moment's warning, there is a dazzling flash of lightning, a rattling peal; every face disappears from the windows, and all the green shutters go to with a bang.

The streets are full of people, most of them bound for the Piazza to see the fun. There is laughter and jesting everywhere, and the impression of a capital

joke in bare legs and top-boots; the people get their amusement out of it all, though the basements of their houses are soaking and their winter firewood slowly taking in the water. Here is one woman marching along through the flood, serenely regardless of indiscreet disclosure; another in a pair of high top-boots, lent by her friend, who stands on the bridge and looks on. The Piazza is one large lake from the door of Saint Mark's up to the raised walk that runs under one of the colonnades, and right down the Piazzetta out into the stormy lagoon. Under the colonnades a crowd promenades or stands in the arches watching the boats, the gondolas, sandolos, and barche, that charge two centesimi for a row. The bright mosaics of Saint Mark's *façade* and the long lines of the two Procuratie seem to gain in colour and in form as they rise right up from this level of the sea. The doves go wheeling about in the upper air, half in alarm at the unwonted sight below them. Hard by the two granite columns at the sea end of the Piazzetta, some speculators have fixed a rickety wooden bridge two planks wide, that leads to the Ponte della Paglia; but the wind is so high that only a venturous few attempt the passage, and more, it would seem, to keep the game alive than from any pressure of business. They are greeted with applause or laughter as they make their transit in safety or lose their hats on the way. Presently the water begins to go down and then

comes a regular stampede of all the boats in the Piazza, for, once caught there, it is a serious matter to lift a gondola down to the sea. In a moment the bridge is broken up, and the boats, in inextricable confusion, coming streaming down the Piazzetta, bumping together, or now and then giving an ominous crunch against the flags. There is laughter, encouragement, and help from the onlooking crowd. Any excuse serves for some one to rush into the water: a hand to this gondola, a lift to that barchetta. In a very short space the Piazza is empty once more. The water falls fast, leaving patches of green seaweed on the stones. Out towards San Giorgio and the gardens a heavy haze hangs in the sky; a wind laden with foam drives inward from the sea. There is the perpetual boom of the Adriatic on the beach, and the hot breath of the scirocco sweeping over the heaving grey expanse of water that breaks in waves on the marble steps and foundations of the Piazzetta.

# THE CASA DEGLI SPIRITI

On the north-eastern side of Venice, looking across the northern lagoon, there is a solitary house which is said to be haunted. The house must once have belonged to a wealthy Venetian family, for there are traces of splendour about its balconies and the mouldings of its windows. But now it is deserted and falling into disrepair. The green shutters of the upper stories are always closed, and they are beginning to part from their rusty hinges; a little more and the wind will surely make ghostly noises at night as it whistles through the gaping woodwork, blowing hard and keen across the water from the hills where it is bred above Trieste.

The position of the house is remarkable, one of the most remarkable in Venice. It stands on the easternmost point of the city, near the Church of Madonna dell' Orto, and not far from the reputed homes of Titian and Tintoret. From the windows the view to north and east is unconfined; the eye can follow the sweep of that old-world plain which closes the water avenue of the Adriatic, a plain once populous with cities—Aquileia, Grado, Oderzo, Altino—

and watered by rivers of historic names—the Tagliamento and the Isonzo, on whose banks the Empire of the East was lost and won. A mist usually overhangs the plain; but above the mist rise the crests of the Julian Alps and the mountains of Titian's country, the Cadore; and, following this line from peak to snowy peak, the eye is led at length to its vanishing point among the hills of Carniola. Nearer at hand, upon the lagoon, lie Burano and Torcello, distinguished by their campanili—Burano's thin and pointed, Torcello's solid and square. Nearer still is Murano, beneath a curtain of smoke that is sent up daily from its glass furnaces; while nearest of all is the square brick wall of the cemetery, overtopped by cypress trees. Every day the picturesque Venetian funerals pass from the city to San Michele. The sad processions steal slowly out upon the lagoon from under the bridge near San Giovanni e Paolo, with lights and music. The priest's boat, with little white acolytes holding the cross in the bows, leads the way; it is followed by the funeral barge, the bier, draped in black and gold, rising high in the middle. The dull beating of the drums, the wailing of the flutes, the sob of the *celloes*, comes muffled and moaning across the water to the windows of this solitary house.

But immediately under these windows the scene is more lively; for the large basin, that surrounds the house on two sides, is used as a store-place

for the rafts of pine-wood which are sent down the Piave from the mountains of Tyrol. The pale yellow planks, bound together by withes, come floating leisurely along with the tide, like some long yellow water-snake; or, when the tide turns, they are moored to the posts which mark the canal from the Piave to Venice. These rafts are so lengthy that it takes five or six men to manage each; and as the journey occupies a week or so, the men build themselves shelter huts upon the planks, in front of which they cook their *polenta*, and sleep inside, on beds of shavings. The rafts are brought to shore in the basin under the haunted house, and the withes are cut, and each plank, one by one, is drawn out and placed on its end in the long wood-stores, where they are left to season for several years before they are shipped to Egypt and other woodless countries. These wood-sheds are curious and charming places, with their delicate and pervasive perfume of the pine, the interminable vistas of planks arranged like the letter A, the long grassy walks between each file, and the boundary walls that are mantled deep in ivy. Quiet, dreamy places, where the perfume and the stillness, the light lap of waters on the wharfing, invite to sleep.

The Casa degli Spiriti, for all its splendid situation, has an evil repute in Venice. It may well be the local habitation of one of those rare Venetian ghost-stories which are told by the old women of the place.

They say that there was once a wealthy Venetian gentleman and his wife, who lived in this house. The gentleman had a friend who was his groomsman at his wedding, and then, according to Venetian custom, godfather to his first child. In Venice this relation of godfather, or *compare di San Zuan*, is a very sacred one, nearer and more sacred than any other. As time went on, the lady and her *compare* fell in love with one another; the husband knew it; and all three lived most miserably. Presently the *compare* fell ill, and died; and the lady, for grief, likewise fell ill, and came to the point of death. One night she said to her waiting-maid, who knew the whole story of her love, 'When I am dead I wish that no one but you should watch by me.' The maid promised; and in a day or two the lady died. The other servants wished to make the vigil for their mistress; but the maid replied that it had been ordered otherwise. So the servants went away, and left the maid alone with the dead. She, when they were all gone, lit four torches about the couch, and sat down to read the office for the departed. When midnight came the door of the room opened, and the dead *compare* came slowly in. When the maid saw the dead man coming towards her, her blood ran to water; she could not move nor cry. The ghost motioned her to follow him to the bed. Then he raised the lady up, and she began to dress. When she was dressed, the ghost drew her arm through his,

and, signing to the maid to light them down-stairs, they all three left the room. Down and down they went, till they reached the lowest vaulted cellar of the house; then the ghost struck the torch from the waiting-maid's hand, and she fell in a swoon on the floor.

This is the story that is told to account for the ominous reputation of the haunted house. But the rationalists also have their say in the matter; and two reasons are assigned for the singular name of the Casa degli Spiriti. Some say that the house was once the resort of a literary and artistic society, and that it takes its name from the *beaux esprits* who used to congregate there. Others, with a grimmer probability on their side, affirm that the house was used for purposes of autopsy by the medical students of Venice; and the dead bodies lay the night there, before they were carried to San Michele in the early morning.

Whichever view one pleases to adopt, the Casa degli Spiriti, with its splendid and solitary situation, its ominous repute and its singular name, is an object of no small interest. It would have made a fine setting for some weird yet realistic story by the author of *La Grande Breteche.*

# SANT' ELENA

AMONG the many beauties of Venice which are already dead or surely dying, not the least lovely and remarkable was the island of Sant' Elena. Was, not is, for already the iron-foundry, to which the island is condemned, has altered its aspect and impressed a rigid regularity of brick wall and low-roofed worksheds upon the once beautiful and varied outline of convent and garden parapet. No one who has seen Venice is likely to forget Sant' Elena. It is that little island which, of all the islands in the lagoon, lies nearest to the city: just off the point of the public gardens. It was always a beautiful object —whether in spring, when the buds were bursting on the trees of its garden; or in late autumn, when the bare branches stood out in relief against the warm red walls of the old convent, and the pines and cypresses at one corner acquired a greater value of colour from the absence of all other greenery. The island was so beautiful in itself, and is so picturesquely placed, detached from the city and yet in a measure belonging to it—like a full stop at the close of that noble paragraph in the book of Venice, the Riva

degli Schiavoni and the public gardens—that the memory of it haunts some still and sacred corner of the mind.

There are places which seem marked for public applause, and praise is lavished upon them till it becomes commonplace: there are others which we all of us know and love, and yet, for some reason, we keep our knowledge to ourselves, and do not go into raptures over them; we even feel a sense of injury, as though a trespass were being committed on our private demesne, should we by accident discover that some one else holds the same appreciative views, which we believed to be peculiar to ourselves. For instance, no one talks or writes about the lake of Bourget as they do of Como; yet every traveller by the Cenis knows how lovely that lake is by daylight, or, better still, when the moon is pouring her light upon its waters through a mellow haze 'just tinged with blue,' and the great château of the House of Savoy gleams cold and weird above its headland on the farther side.

So it was with Sant' Elena. The little island established itself in the silence of a loving memory. It was so pleasant to go there on a lazy afternoon in spring; one was sure of quiet and plenty of sunshine. The old gardener—a character whom Scott would have delighted to draw—seemed to have become a part and parcel of the place he tended; as venerable as the ivied church, as peaceful and dreamy as the

cloistered garden. It could hardly be called a garden, but rather a wild shrubbery, surrounding a stretch of lawn that spread beneath an avenue of elms and sycamores. In the sward, the periwinkles, violets, and potentillas—with fruit like strawberries, and called therefore *inganna donna*, or lady's deceit—ran riot together. At one end a little grove of pines and cypresses offered their shade, and, at the other, a row of pomegranate trees put out their scarlet blossoms in July. The old cloister of the monastery enclosed a garden of roses, which grew in native wildness as they chose, while up the slender shafts and spandrels of the cloister vine stems were twined. The walls were coated with a fine surface of lichen, and the *Silentium* above the dormitory door was half filled with velvety mosses and ferns that had taken root there and among the heavy mouldings of the *lavabo* outside the refectory.

The whole place was in an admirable disorder, tangled and wild and left to itself, and beautiful to see. From the corner of the wall overhanging the channel that surrounds the island, one looked across the lagoon to the green point of the public garden. The crabs had it all their own way in the shoal water, and chased one another over the mudbanks, making little ripples on the surface where they moved. The Alps rose up behind Venice, each familiar ridge and peak clearly defined in serene weather: Antelao, Tofana, Sorapiz, known to the wanderer in the

Dolomites. To the left hand, far away, the Euganean Hills threw the reflection of their cones upon the water. The place was perfectly peaceful and quiet, save for the distant and muffled sound that stole across the lagoon from the arsenal.

But now the old monastery walls have been pulled down, their place is taken by iron-girdered workshops; the quiet convent cemetery has been dug up and the crosses overthrown; most of the trees are felled, and the axe is laid to the roots of those which remain; a yawning ditch is cut across the lawn; the church is to be the engine-house if the walls can stand the tremor, and in place of campanile and bells it has the tall brick chimney with its smoky pennon; a new square island of forced earthwork, carrying wharves and landing-stages, has sprung up round the original island, destroying its beauty of line. There is no hope of resurrection. Sant' Elena is lost for ever to its friends of old.

The lover of Venice may be allowed to record, with a certain regret, the beauties that must pass away; and a sacred and beautiful feature of Venice has perished in the desecration of Sant' Elena. For the island church, besides containing the tombs of many famous Venetians of the Giustiniani and Loredano families, was held to be the last resting-place of an empress-saint, no less a person than Helen, mother of Constantine the Great. To Englishmen this disturbance of the imperial tomb should be distasteful; for

Helen, if we may trust the dim and dubious outline of her story, was an Englishwoman, born at Colchester. To be at once an empress and a saint, mother of Constantine and 'inventrix' of the Cross—for this it was which won for Helen her exalted rank in the hierarchy—is a conjunction of honours that can hardly be paralleled. Yet all this lustre has barely sufficed to rescue her name from oblivion; no one now would keep Saint Helen's Day, the 18th of August, and few remember who Saint Helen was who gives her name to the beautiful island of the lagoons.

Dreaming in the quiet of the island cloister, the silence and the ruins of the old monastic life combined to draw a perfume from the cadenced Latin of Saint Ambrose's rhetoric. The false antitheses, strained almost to impiety, and the unreality of the spiritual attitude in this speech which Ambrose places in the empress's mouth when she, the mother of the man destined to baptize the empire officially, stood in Golgotha—that journey ended which was to achieve her saintly rank—are condoned and made tolerable by the persuasion of this decadent Latin, set in the quiet of a cloister garden. 'Accessit,' he says, 'ad Golgotham et ait, ecce locus pugnæ, ubi est victoria? Quæro vexillum salutis et non invenio. Ego in regnis, et Crux Domini in pulvere. Ego in aulis, et in ruinis Christi triumphus. Quomodo me redemptam arbitror si redemptio ipsa non cernitur? Aperiatur humus ut salus effulgeat. Quid egisti diabole ut

absconderes lignum nisi ut iterum vincereris? Vicit te Maria, quæ genuit triumphatorem, quæ sine diminutione virginitatis edidit eum qui crucifixus vinceret te, et mortuus subjugaret. Illa quasi Sancta Dominam gestavit; ego crucem ejus investigabo. Illa generatum docuit, ego resuscitatum. Illa fecit ut Deus inter homines videretur, ego ad remedium peccatorum divinum de ruinis elevabo vexillum.'

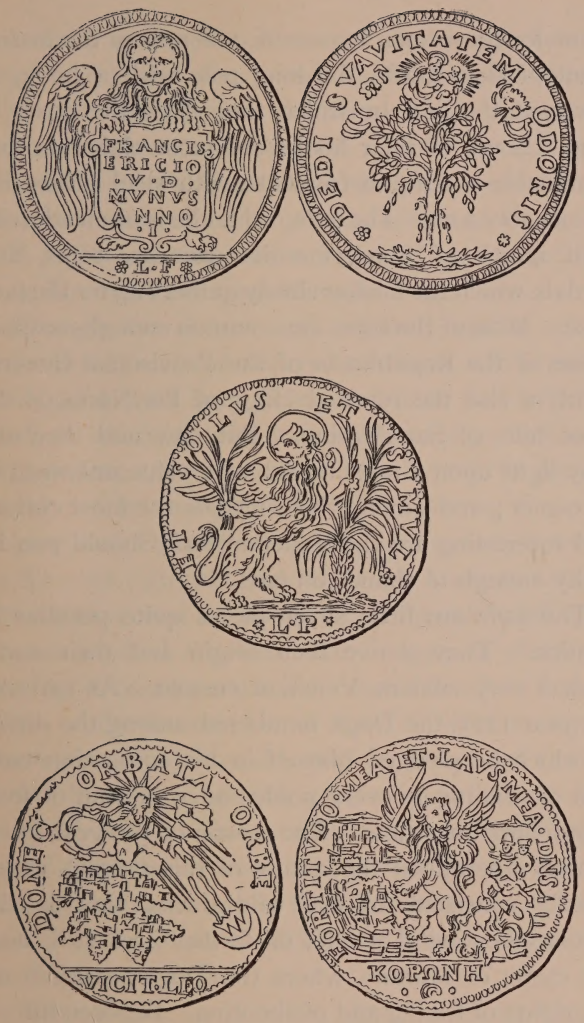
After her death the empress's remains suffered the usual *post-mortem* voyages which fall to the lot of saints; until, in the year 1211, they found a resting-place among the lagoons. But now the saintly and imperial ashes have been disturbed once more, unless indeed, as the pious hope, that urn contained them which was lately removed to San Pietro in Castello. If it be not so, then indeed—

'Sceptre and crown
Have tumbled down,
And in the dust are equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.'

The island of Sant' Elena has passed through many vicissitudes of fortune: it has been monastery, barracks, even bakehouse before now—at the beginning of this century there were forty-three ovens on the island, and a regiment of one hundred German bakers. From all these it has suffered little ill, or time has repaired the ravages inflicted. It would be mere folly to hope that it can ever recover from the injury of the iron-foundry to which it is doomed.

# OSELE

ONE of the most familiar objects at a Venetian landing-place is the old man with the hook who draws the gondola's bows up to the steps and holds the boat steady while the passenger alights. He expects two centesimi for his services from native Venetians, but from foreigners his expectations reach a far higher figure. These hookers are of very little real use, for any gondolier is quite able to bring his boat up to the *riva* without their aid. But they are an old-established body, intimately connected with the gondolas and the *traghetti* of Venice. Rough, ragged, unkempt-looking creatures they are; some of them wrapped in picturesque tatters, which gape and show a chain and a charm around the neck. Most of them have wide slouched hats, which they hold out obsequiously for their fee. But for all their rags and misery they are a close society, *impiegati*; and not to every one does it chance to be hooker. The municipality allow only a certain number of men—chiefly old gondoliers—to ply the trade; and no one may do so without a licence, and until his name has been entered in the municipal registers. The Venetian




VENETIAN OSELE

name for these men is *ganzeri*, taken from the instrument of their trade, the long pole with a hook, or *ganzo*, at the end, by which they draw the boats to land. Some of their hooks are most elaborate and formidable-looking instruments, with steel heads like a Lochaber axe. The pole or handle is often adorned with scraps of glass, mosaics, cameos, coins, and medals, which the hooker slowly gathers up for the purpose. Most of the coins are common enough—copper pieces of the Republic, or of the Provisional Government, or else the rejected effigy of Pio Nono, or the three hills of San Marino. But now and then one may light upon a rarer medal, of a value unknown to its owner; and among these medals the most curious and interesting are the Venetian *osele*, should you be lucky enough to chance on one.

The *osele* are little silver pieces quite peculiar to Venice. They derive their origin and their name from a very ancient Venetian custom. As early as the year 1275, the Doge numbered among the duties to which he pledged himself in his coronation oath that of sending to every nobleman a present of food about Christmas-time. The season of the year (mid-winter) determined the nature of this present, which usually consisted of five wild ducks, shot in the lagoons beyond Torcello, or farther east still, near the castle of Marano, where the Doge possessed all the rights of fishing and of shooting. Between the 1st of December and Christmas Day thousands of these

*mazzorin*, as the Venetians call them, were brought into Venice and distributed by the Doge's steward. The care with which the steward discharged this delicate task, and coupled the fat and the lean so as to avoid jealousy, has passed into a proverb of the Venetian market. The poultry-sellers at the Rialto still say when they sell a brace, 'One fat and one lean, like the birds from Marano.'

Though the distant and solitary reaches of the lagoons still are, and always have been, rich in water-fowl, yet it soon became impossible to find sufficient birds to satisfy all who had a claim upon the Christmas present. Seven thousand fresh duck, fat or lean, could not be brought into Venice during the early days of each December. The Great Council, therefore, in the year 1361, allowed the Doge, Lorenzo Celsi, to substitute a sum of money when the birds fell short of the required number. But, in spite of strict preserving, it became more and more difficult to find the birds, while the number of those entitled to receive them steadily increased, till, in the year 1521, it would have required nearly nine thousand wild duck to satisfy all just claims. The Doges were obliged to spend large sums from their private purse; and the custom and ceremony of the Christmas present began to fall into a disorder which was most repugnant to the Venetian temper.

Accordingly, on June 28, 1521, the Great Council passed a decree authorising the Doge to substitute,

in every case, a silver medal for the present of wild duck. The medal at once took its name from the birds it represented, and was called an *osela*, the Venetian for a bird. When the Christmas present from the Doge to the nobility was altered from five wild duck to a silver medal, the prince in person could discharge his duty on one day, and with greater convenience and ceremony than hitherto. The day fixed for the presentation of the *osele* was the 4th of December, Saint Barbara's Day. On her festival all the nobility assembled at the ducal palace, and were ushered by groups into the presence, where they paid their respects to the Doge, and received the medals from his hand.

The *osele* were ordered to be coined at the mint of Venice; and the Government supplied the silver to the amount of a quarter of a ducat for each medal, and thus relieved the Doge's purse of a serious burden. Two years later, in the reign of Andrea Gritti, the die for the *osele* was fixed. 'On the one side shall be stamped the image of Misser San Marco, standing up, with the serene Prince kneeling before him, and having the standard of the Republic in his hand, and the same legend that the ducat bears. On the other side these words shall be impressed, "*Andreæ Gritti principis munus anno primo.*"' And this is the form which the *osela* preserved, with some few variations, till the year 1631, when the Doge, Francesco Erizzo, substituted the lion of Saint Mark for the figures of

the saint and the prince. After 1631 the variations are considerable, for each Doge was at liberty to select his own die, and the design was usually changed every year.

The silver *osela* was not, in its origin, a coin of the Republic, but a medal struck by each Doge each year of his reign. Some of the nobility, however, into whose hands the *osele* came, were poor; and, as the medals were supposed to contain a fixed quantity of silver, they soon passed into circulation, but without any legal standard of value. To remedy this abuse, the Council of Ten, in the year 1541, ordered the *oscle* for the future to be cast of the size and value of three silver marcelli; and at this rate they entered the regular currency of the Republic.

A complete collection of these medals may be seen at the Museo Civico. The series begins in the year 1521 with the reign of Antonio Grimani, and is continued, in unbroken succession, down to the close of the Republic in 1796, under the Doge Lodovico Manin. The series is unique, for no other State has minted an uninterrupted sequence of medals through two hundred and seventy-five years of its life. But, besides being singular both in origin and in completeness, the artistic interest of the series is of no small account. The designs for the obverse were more or less fixed and conventional; but the designs for the reverse display all the varieties of the dominant taste, passing from the simplicity of

Antonio Grimani's inscription through the florid and decadent periods of decoration, and returning to a severer style in the later years of the eighteenth century. The reverse was designed each year by the master minter, or *massaro d'argento*, as he was called, whose initials are usually to be found in the exergue at the base of the medal. Sometimes the *massaro d'argento* produced a design so successful that the Doge adopted it in permanence during his reign. For example, the medal of the Doge Marino Grimani, designed by Sebastian Marcello, was repeated year after year. It bears on the reverse a winged and aureoled lion of Saint Mark, rampant, holding a cross in his right paw, with this mysterious legend, '*Sydera cordis.*' Until the ninth year of Francesco Loredano (1761) the *osele* were stamped by the hand, with a die and hammer; and, in the hurry of striking a large number, the impressions are frequently twisted in such a way that the obverse and reverse do not correspond. In the year 1761 the press was introduced, and the whole character of the *osele* was changed. The first of the minted *osele* is an interesting medal. On the reverse is a fine design of the clock-tower in the piazza; and on the obverse Venetia seated in a study surrounded by mechanical, artistic, and mathematical instruments; over her head the legend, '*Artium studiorumque mater et altrix.*' After this date the dies are often finely conceived, especially the female figures

and the galleys, which occur frequently. The *osela* of the third year of Alvise Mocenigo IV. is a good example. It represents a fully armed ship of war, riding at anchor bow and stern, with this motto, '*Binis immota manebo.*'

But the chief interest of the *osele* lies in the historical allusions of their designs and legends. Each year the Doge selected some event, of public or of private importance, to commemorate upon his medals. And so this series is rich in reminiscences of Venetian history and illustrative of the various tempers of the Doges; one is pious, another patriotic, another proud of his family honours or of his own achievements.

On the very first medal of the series, for example, Antonio Grimani records the tragedy and the triumph of his life. The *osela* shows Peace and Justice hand in hand, with the legend, '*Justitia et Pax osculatæ sunt.*' After the disastrous battle of Sapienza, Antonio Grimani, who had commanded there, was cashiered and ordered to present himself at Venice in chains. The injustice of the order stung Grimani, and he sailed to Venice in his own flagship, and without chains. On his way he touched at Parenzo, on the Istrian coast; his son Vincenzo met him there, and in vain implored him to submit, and to obey the order of the Government. Grimani refused to bend. At length Vincenzo himself kneeled down, and with his own hands put the irons on his father's feet. Antonio probably owed his life to his son's

insistence, for when he reached Venice the people met him with cries of rage and clamoured for his execution. No one answered to his *bona sera* as he landed at the piazzetta. He could hardly walk for the weight of the chains, till his son, the Cardinal Domenico, came behind his father and held them up. So, supported by his children, he went to prison. He was banished to Istria, but escaped to Rome, whence, for the good services he rendered the Republic at the Papal court, he was recalled to Venice, and elected Doge after nineteen years of exile. He struck this medal in the first year of his reign to mark his sense of Justice satisfied and Peace restored.

The heroic deeds in Venetian history find ample record in the *osele*. Francesco Morosini, of Peloponnesian fame, stamped a drawn sword on one of his medals, and '*Non abstinet ictu*;' on another, an armed hand holding swords, bows, daggers, etc., and the legend, '*Quem non exercuit arcum.*' The ninth year of Francesco Molino celebrates Venetian constancy and single-handed courage against the Turk in this motto, '*Et non fulta non fluxa*,' above a solitary flame that floats over the waters. The fourth year of Marcantonio Giustiniani lauds the same qualities by a winged and aureoled lion, rampant, regardant, holding in one paw a single palm, and in the other a bundle of palms, with this legend, '*Et solus et simul*,' Alone or allied. The famous victory of Lepanto, in the year 1571, is

commemorated by the Doge Alvise Mocenigo I. The medal bears 'MDLXXI. *Anno Magnæ navalis victoriæ dei gra. contra turcas,*' and the Mocenigo rose of five petals at top and bottom.

Some of the Doges love to introduce their family badges on their *osele.* The great House of Mocenigo, for example, were never weary of their rose; they are constantly referring to it, carving it, and painting it on their houses, stamping it everywhere. Their family coat, *per fesse*, azure and argent, two roses counter-changed, occurs more frequently than that of any other Venetian nobles. Some of the Mocenighi medals are almost sentimental in reference to their roses. One of Alvise Mocenigo II. (1705) shows a clear heaven with the crescent moon and many stars, at one side a rose in full bloom, and above this legend, '*Magis redolet luna serena.*' This is bad national history, however, for the crescent moon represents the Turk, and the medal commemorates an alliance between the Republic and her natural foes. But it remained for Alvise Mocenigo III. to express the profoundest belief in the family badge; he represents himself, on the first medal of his reign, reclining against a bed of roses, with this motto, '*Fulcite me floribus,*' Prop me on flowers, if only they be roses. Other princes refer to matters of the purest family history, quite unconnected with the national life. Silvester Valier, for example, recalls the fact that his father before him was Doge, by stamping

two eagles, crowned with ducal caps, flying towards the sun. And Marcantonio Memmo laments the entry of his son upon a religious life, under the influence of Saint Carlo Borromeo, by the motto, '*Doce me facere voluntatem tuam.*'

Municipal reform, and great public works, such as the rectification of the Brenta and the Adige, receive their share of illustration in the *osele*; and not a single medal in the collection but recalls some point of interest in the history of Venice. The medals of the last Doge, Lodovico Manin, have an ominous ring about their legends, when we remember that the convulsions of the French Revolution were about to sweep away one of the oldest and most remarkable commonwealths in Europe. The first medal bears the word '*Libertas*' at its base. The third year's legend runs, '*Concordia civium felicitas reipublicæ.*' The seventh year, the last year but one of all the Doges, has for its motto, '*Pax in virtute tua,*' which reads like a mocking epitaph upon the dying Republic.

The few examples here mentioned will suffice to show how wide is the field and how varied the interest which this collection covers. Genuine *osele* may still be met with, but they are becoming fashionable as ornaments, and forgeries must be looked for and avoided. Perhaps the safest hunting-ground is the staff of the ragged hooker at some of the many landing-places in the city.

# SAILS AND SAILMAKING

THE sails of the Venetian fishing-boats are among the most vivid and beautiful features in the landscape of the lagoons. Their hues are so rich and varied as they shift in the changing light; so salient are the reds and oranges on their canvas, when relieved against the dominant white and grey of Venice and the lagoon, that they form a glowing point of colour from which the whole picture falls away, through endless subtle gradations and that perpetual play of light which shimmers over the waters of Venice. The sails are always a beautiful sight, whether one finds them in the auroral clearness of an early summer morning, grouped near the point of the gardens, where the fishing-boats come to anchor and discharge the produce of their long night's toil, all their large canvas hanging loose and motionless in the unwindy shelter of the garden trees; or whether it be later in the day when the boats put out to sea once more, with their great sails distended as they tack against the fresh scirocco breeze: they cross and recross each other, like coloured shuttles on the grey water-web, or like stately ladies threading the mazes of some strange

sea dance, till they have gained the point of Sant' Elena and the wind blows fair that sweeps them out to sea by the Lido port. Or, yet again, they are beautiful to see from San Nicoletto and the point of the Austrian fortress, as they lie in the far offing, towards Trieste and near their favourite fishing-ground by the mouth of the Piave, a shifting city of sails with sunlight full upon their orange, red, and white.

The majority of boats in use upon the lagoons are flat-bottomed. The waters of the lagoons being of a peculiar character—for the most part shoals intersected by deep channels with strong currents—the boats which were to ply upon these waters required to be adapted to the necessities of the case. The Venetians found by experience that flat-bottomed boats, with no keel and a very large rudder, sunk far below the bottom of the boat and curving some way under it, were best suited to their purpose, and for two reasons. The first is the obvious reason that, if the boats had a keel, they could not cross the shoals about their business of fishing. In fact, the boats of the lagoons had to be so built that they should be capable of sailing in deep water and of being rowed or punted in the shallows; and a large rudder, which could be shipped and unshipped at pleasure, enabled them to do this. But the second reason has been less generally observed. It is well known that, in the open sea, with large spaces for tacking, where the wind is the chief factor in the motive power, and currents count for little, a

boat with a keel will make less leeway than a flat-bottomed boat. But the case is different at the ports of the Venetian lagoons, where the outgoing or incoming tides run with the speed and volume of large rivers. There the current counts for as much as the wind; and the keel of a boat that is tacking presents such a surface to the opposing water that the power of the sails is minimised, and the boat loses seriously upon each tack. For purposes of entering the lagoons from the sea against wind and water, a flat-bottomed boat, which offers no resistance to the current below and feels the full value of the wind above, has every advantage over boats that are built with a keel.

Those who live by an open and stormy sea entertain a general idea that flat-bottomed boats cannot be good or safe sailors; but a short residence in Venice would soon dispel this belief. The Venetian sea-going boats, whether pilot or fisher, are excellent sailors if made in the true Venetian fashion. The whole secret of the vessel's structure and capabilities lies in the rudder. This is made very large and deep, and, in fact, it takes the place of the keel. That being the case, the whole stability of the boat is at the stern; the bows have no hold on the water. And it is for this reason that the Venetian boats of two masts carry the larger sail at the stern and the smaller one at the bows, an arrangement which is rather surprising to English eyes, and which gives

the boats a character of their own. Everything in the management of the boat depends on the steersman's tact and understanding of the rudder, and in skilful hands it is surprising to see the large spread of canvas that these flat-bottomed boats will carry in a high wind.

When one first comes to Venice, and takes to the water, the variety of boats seems interminable. The ear is confused by a legion of strange names: *trabaccoli*, *bragozzi*, *topi*, *cavalline*, *barche*, *barchette*, *peate burchii*, *sandoli*, *vipere*, *bissone*, *bucintori*, etc. But presently, out of this multitude, one begins to distinguish four or five as the dominant types. The *trabaccoli* are those large coasting traders which, for the most part, bring stone and wood from Istria, and wine from Dalmatia and the Romagna, and whose masts stand crowded together at their proper anchorage in the Giudecca canal, behind the Salute. They are not lagoon vessels at all, and so we will not speak about them here. The gondola and sandolo, the two boats of pleasure, are not really built for sailing, for a rudder forms no part of their equipment, and is difficult to fix, owing to the manner in which their sterns are cut away and the small amount of bottom they have upon the water. Nevertheless, if a rudder can be attached, which may be done in the case of the sandolo, these boats sail fairly well, though not so well as their sister boats the *topi*. The gondoliers are fond of sailing their

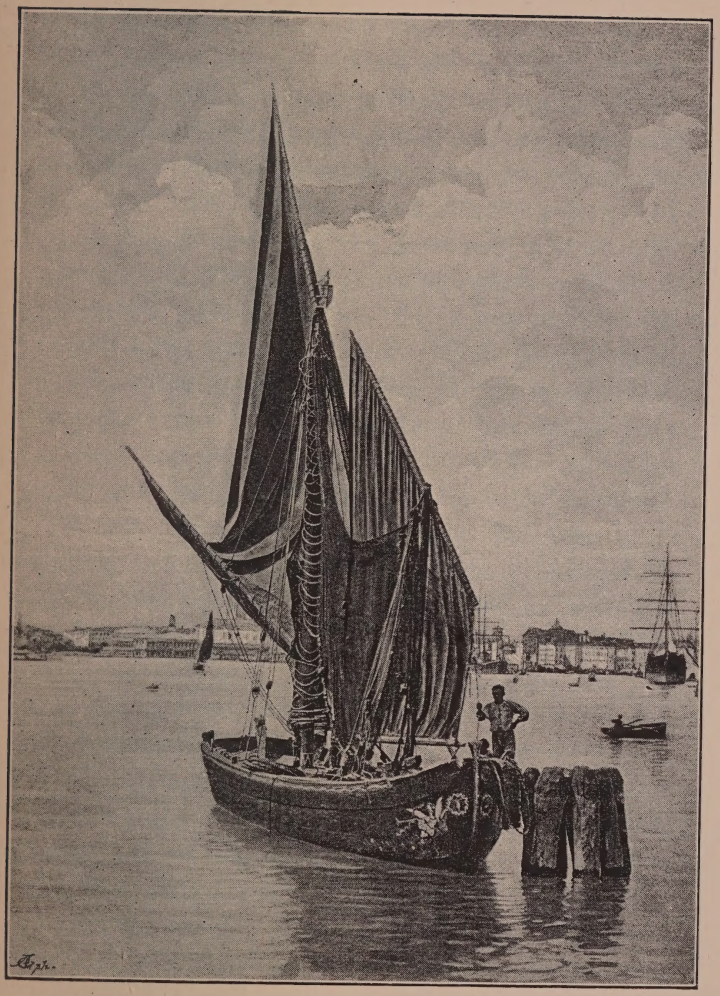
gondolas, if the wind be behind midships, using an oar as a rudder with considerable skill, after the manner of the vikings. It is no easy accomplishment at first, for the gondola has a trick of falling away from the wind. But the two sailing-boats of the lagoons, *par excellence*, are the *topi* and *bragozzi*.

The *topi* are the smaller; they are undecked boats, chiefly used by the pilots at Malamocco and Lido, by the *sardellanti*, or sardine-fishers, of San Piero, and by the market-gardeners of Chioggia, Pelestrina, and Mazzorbo. Every one knows how picturesque they look, with their bright sails spread above a pile of tomatoes, pumpkins, pomegranates, grapes, and figs, and the men stretched in lazy length on the top of all. The *topi* carry the usual cut and rig of Venetian boats, two lug sails and a jib. Those who are curious may always distinguish a Chioggian boat from any other by this note, that the Chioggians alone carry the yards of both sails on the same side of their masts.

The *bragozzi* are much larger than the *topi*, and immensely broad in the stern. They are decked, and are chiefly employed in sea-fishing. They often sail far out in company, towards the banks off the mouth of the Piave, and every morning one of their number returns to Venice, laden with the whole results of the night's fishing, which is sold at the Rialto; provisions for the fleet are bought, and the boat sails out again to join its companions. The *bragozzi* are

the most picturesque boats that traffic upon the lagoons. They carry a vast spread of canvas on their mainmast, thanks to the great breadth of their stern. At the masthead they usually display a curious weather-cock of fretted woodwork, filled in with bright-coloured bunting, and sometimes above that again, for luck, the little figure of a humpbacked man, a *gobbo*; for in Venice it is a sign of luck to meet a humpback in the street, while a *zotto*, or lame man, is a sure precursor of misfortune. It is the *bragozzi* alone that carry upon their bows those wonderful flying figures of Fame blowing a trumpet in a swirl of drapery. Nothing can be prettier than to see the *bragozzi* lying, bow by painted bow, in a long row, at the Riva degli Schiavoni on a Sunday morning while the men are gone to mass—for the fishers of the lagoons are a pious folk, and fish are dear, and not fresh, in the Venice market on Monday mornings.

The Venetians are not good boat-builders. The only boats they make successfully are gondolas and sandoli; all the sea-goers come from Pelestrina or Chioggia. But they have a reputation for skill in cutting sails. I once had an opportunity to test their ability. A sail was to be cut for me on the model of another owned by a friend, and the difficulty was to find a piece of dry land in Venice large enough to allow us to spread out the model sail. The Riva was decided on, and an early hour named, so as to



A BRAGOZZO

avoid, if possible, the crowd which inevitably collects in Venice if one dares to stand still even, much more if one be about such a business as cutting a sail, which offers so many opportunities for comment and criticism. Early one morning, then, we went to the Riva, and found our old friend with the pattern sail. A space was swept on the pavement, and the sail spread out. The crowd began to collect—milk-boys, policemen, sailors, loafers, the firemen from the neighbouring station. 'General of the devils!' cried the old sailor to the boys, 'what do you want here?' But the more he pursued them the louder they laughed and the more lightly they skipped across his sail; so he had to let them be to see the business out.

It was a bright, breezy morning, the lagoon all rippled and dancing in sunlight. As we waited for the master sailcutter to come, a sandolo, with sail spread and badly handled, upset between the Riva and San Giorgio. Everybody saw it, but no one took much heed, most just turned their heads; the chief fireman called to two men who were rowing by, and pointed casually in the direction of the sandolo, upon whose upturned bottom a wet and dripping figure was seated, drifting out to sea. The men in the boat nodded, and then all returned to the process of cutting the sail. Presently comes the master, with quick, decided steps and conscious air, gravely salutes, takes out his knife and piece of charcoal, and has the sail stretched out tight. The dimensions are marked

off on the pavement in black; the four corners and the lines for the reefs. Then the long roll of sail-cloth is unwound and cut into lengths, one overlapping the other, to allow for the sewing. The lengths are numbered, folded, and carried away to be made up. The whole process took about twenty minutes. Again the master salutes gravely, pockets his knife and charcoal; the crowd disperses with various prophecies as to the result of the sail. But in spite of all assurances that the sail would be the best in Venice, it did not turn out well; for sailmaking is a very fine and delicate affair, by no means so simple as it looks. Although the sail may have been accurately cut, yet, in the sewing, the difference of the tenth of an inch in each strip of cloth—a difference which may happen from the mere drawing of the thread—is enough to ruin the whole, to make the sail shiver at the edge or lose the wind in the middle, and so do only half the work it should.

After the sail is made it has to be painted. Almost every boat of build smaller than a *trabaccolo* carries painted sails. The colouring matter is a kind of earth, like the reddle we use for marking sheep, which is sold in the shops of Venice. The earth is mixed with water and dissolved, and for a paint-brush one uses a sponge. The colours to be obtained in these earths are limited in number; they are red, orange, blue, and pale green. The two latter are rarely used, and the majority of sails are painted in

orange and red. The designs are of infinite variety, according to the caprice or the patience of the *paron*; they range from perfectly plain sails, painted all in one colour, through stripes and geometrical patterns, up to the most elaborate representations of saints and madonnas. The process of painting is easy enough. You simply walk round the outline of your madonna, or saint, with a sponge full of colour, fill in the details of feature and drapery, and lay on the background in large masses. The result is sometimes rude, but always effective. When the sail has been painted, the colour is fixed by dipping the whole three or four times in the sea and leaving it to dry in the sun.

The patterns on the Venetian sails are one of the most charming and peculiar features of the place; though it is to be feared that they are fast falling from their ancient splendour. The decay of the religious sentiment is fatal to the art of sail-painting, as it has been to so many other arts. But Saint George slaying an ink-black dragon, or Saint Anthony, or Titian's Madonna in the Assumption, are still displayed to the winds of the lagoon. Some of the most beautiful effects are obtained by simple colour without any design; there is one *bragozzi* which carries a large red sail with a canton painted in deep blue, pale sea-green, and white; in the distance it looks like the colouring on a drake's head and neck. The ragged and patched sails are no less picturesque, with here and there a splash of clear sky-blue, which you

discover, on near approach only, to be a rent in the canvas and the real sky glowing through it. But the majority of sails that are not content with mere geometrical patterns—and these are by far the larger number—bear some symbolical design. Fortunes, lighthouses, the globe surmounted by a cross, even a huge yellow *polenta* on a red background. These are easy to interpret, and the significance of the last is not to be missed by a hungry seafaring people with a voracious appetite for their favourite food. Some designs, however, are not so easy to decipher. What is one to make of a cock with a star on its beak, for instance? or a star with a flash of lightning striking across the sail? and a heart split open by a wedge looks almost as though the *maladie du siècle* had reached these fishing-folk; it is a device for Leopardi or De Musset, but hardly for a sailor of the Venetian lagoons. The only sail I have ever seen with an historical significance in its design is one which carries the arms of Cyprus, Jerusalem, and Armenia, a cross with four crosslets in the cantons, recalling the time when a Venetian lady bore these titles and the Republic stole her kingdom from her.

No place possesses such a power of harmonising details as Venice does, thanks to the vast expanse of air and water wherein each feature finds its proper rest. Even were they less picturesque than is their habit, the Venetian sails would still be an important item in the general impression of the lagoons, giving

a sense of life and movement as they walk the waters. But as it is, with their brilliant colour, their quaint designs, the flavour of salt, free life that belongs to them as they spread to the sea and sky, the sails of Venice must always remain one of its dearest features for those who love the city in the sea.

CHIOZZOTTI.

# A VISION OF 'LA SENSA'

THE seafaring people of Venice, and the sea on which they live, the union and interpenetration of these two elements in Venetian life, are the main subject of this book. The Venetians have always been conscious of this intimate relation between themselves and their home, a relation which still exists, and which gives to Venice so much of that peculiar charm which she exhales. The relation still endures, but the outward and visible sign of it, the seal and sacrament of the union, that nuptial ceremony of Ascension-tide when the Doge in the name of Venice wedded the sea, has passed away with the Republic that created it. Once a year the marriage rite was performed, and all Venetians recognised it as their great and peculiar ceremony, the signature of their nationality, the token of their indissoluble union and undying love. A reminiscence of this national function, whereby the Venetians declared and solemnised the singularity of their home and of their union with it, we may be allowed to portray on these pages which have dealt chiefly with this aspect of Venetian life; but it is as a vision only, as a fancy of the night, that we can recover and justly place the recollection of a ceremony

that has been so long time dead. The fragments of the *Bucentaur* are lying in the Arsenal Museum; the piazza, in the broad sunlight, no longer knows the Doge, the councillors, nor the noble train that used to tread its pavement. It is the realm of fancy and the watches of the night which must help us to reconstitute the solemn function of Ascension Day.

It is the vigil of Ascension Day, and two o'clock in the morning. The Piazza is all deserted and silent. The full light of the May moon streams in unbroken splendour down the middle of the Piazzetta, from where she hangs high above San Giorgio; the centre of the pavement is a broad stripe of silver white between the deep shadows that lie beneath the colonnades of the old library and of the ducal palace. The summit of the campanile and the corner of Saint Mark's are also touched with frosted silver; and out to sea the surface of the lagoon is broken into ripples in whose hollows the moonlight is caught and shivered into dancing flecks of white.

But is it Ascension morn of 1883? What large and stately bark is that which lies beside the mole? She bears a golden figure of Justice on her bows; and her topmost deck slopes upwards to the stern, where two carved figures hold aloft a curving shell that forms a canopy for a throne. Over the throne floats the broad silk banner of Saint Mark, on a crimson ground a golden lion, winged and aureoled, with paws

upon the open evangel. From stem to stern this upper deck, this gallery of a hundred feet, is roofed in crimson velvet, and its walls are rich in carved woodwork overlaid with gilt, and pierced by windows, forty-eight in all. From the port-holes of the lower deck forty-two great oars project, and lie upon the water; each oar with its four rowers, workmen from the arsenal, waiting to row the Doge to wed the sea. But not a sound rises from all the hundred and sixty-eight on board, nor from the crowd of boats and barges, gondolas and skiffs, that have suddenly covered the face of the lagoon. They hang there, motionless and silent upon the water, waiting.

And now from the high carved portal of the ducal palace there issues, in silence, a long and stately procession. An old man, bowed with age, walks first. His beard is snowy white. The strong features of his face, the nose and lips and brows, that the skin seems to cover like parchment, are set in dignity and calm. Over a white linen cap he wears the ducal bonnet, unjewelled, made of simple gold brocade. His shoulders are covered by a rich ermine tippet, fastened with buttons shaped like nuts; and below the fur the heavy gold-brocaded mantle reaches to his feet, and trails upon the ground. After the Doge comes a train of nobles and great officers of State; the ambassadors of Cæsar, of the most Christian and of the Catholic kings; the Procuratori, the ducal councillors, the Senate, the nobles of the

Great Council, in robes of crimson, of scarlet, and of black, with stoles of the various knightly orders to which their bearers belong; a train of splendid colour, passing in silence down the cool, broad, moon-besilvered pavement of the Piazzetta. But no sound of footfalls echoes from the flagstones as they pass.

They sweep on board the *Bucentaur*; the nobles range themselves down either side of the long gallery, and through their midst the Doge passes upward to his throne. The oars strike the water, but no sound is heard. The great barge slowly leaves the shore. The standard of Saint Mark unfurls itself to an imperceptible breeze. The throng of other boats form silently behind, and follow in the wake of the *Bucentaur* The Doge of the Nicolotti leads the train; he is the chief of the Venetian *popolo* for this Ascension Day, and marshals the crowd that follows. First come the barges of the glass-workers from Murano; their trophies of crystal, ruby, or of opal wares shimmer and scintillate as the moonlight falls on the curves or facettings of cup and goblet. Behind these are the barges of the six great fraternities—the Carità, San Giovanni, the Misericordia, San Marco, San Rocco, and San Teodoro; each bears the banner of the brothers at its stern. And after these comes the whole population of the city, that streams forth on this their most Venetian festival, when by a solemn act of matrimony they proclaim that they and the sea on which they live are wedded and for ever one.

In silence, without sound of oars, the whole long water train sweeps far away over the spaces of the moonlit lagoon; the great *Bucentaur* towering in the van. As they pass the island convent of Sant' Elena, another barge steals noiselessly over the water to join the procession. Its rowers bring it close up to the *Bucentaur's* stern, and the white-mitred Patriarch, with all his company of bishops, canons, priests, and chapter of his church at San Pietro, pass on board the Doge's barge. Behind the Patriarch come three acolytes, who carry three golden basins filled with roses. In a cloud of incense, the high priest of Venice moves up the middle of the gallery, between the noble crowd, and takes his seat below the steps that lead to the ducal throne. Then the Doge beckons the acolytes, and they approach and stand beside his chair. From the golden basins of flowers he gives a rose to each of those who are with him on the barge, to keep in memory of this Ascension Day.

And now the great *Bucentaur* and all its train has passed between the towered fortresses of Sant' Andrea and San Nicolo, and reached the open beyond the line of the Lido. The barge slowly turns its bows towards the land, and its stern towards the wide and calm expanse of Adriatic Sea. The Doge and Patriarch both rise, and the priest sprinkles a little water on the ring which the Doge holds in his open hand, and blesses it. Alone, the Doge passes out by a door in the carved work behind his throne, on to the stern

gallery of the barge. In silence he raises the ring on high and drops it into the sea. There is a little splash as the ring touches the water and sinks in the deep. Then, for the first time, the silence of the ceremony is broken, and, as the ring falls from his hand, the Doge cries, 'Desponsamus te, Mare;' and instantly, from all the thousand throats of that great throng, there bursts the answering cry of 'Desponsamus te, Mare,' and rolls away across the tide beneath the glittering moon.

Then the barge turns once more, and the crowd of smaller boats harness themselves to her bows to draw her home. With shouts of joy and singing, the whole procession sweeps away again, round by the corner of the Lido, and enters the lagoon. The sea resumes her old tranquillity, and the moonlight falls in broad masses on her surface. The sounds of mirth are borne far off upon the breeze that blows inland from the water. The nuptials of Venice and her Adriatic are complete. The sea lies wedded, yet alone, beneath the spring night and the silent stars.

# PROCESSIONS

THE Venetian Republic from the earliest times laid great stress upon the external ceremonies of the Church. Its action in this matter was governed by policy as much as by piety. The early history of the Republic, its great commercial development and the consolidation of its power, belongs to the Orient rather than to the West. It was not till the year 1425, in the reign of Francesco Foscari, that Venice entered the political system of Italy, and became a factor in the diplomacy of Western Europe. Before that date, the policy of the Venetians had been devoted to fostering their commerce with the East, and to maintaining a neutral attitude towards the endless embroglios of the Italian States. Rome was the focus of these embroglios. Any connection with Rome must inevitably have involved the Republic in the minute complications of the peninsula; and therefore the Venetians, while always professing themselves good sons of the Western Church, tacitly claimed an ecclesiastical independence of Rome, and asserted that their Patriarch, the heir of Saint Mark, was the equal and not the inferior of Saint Peter's representative. In order to further this policy

of differentiation from Rome, the State did everything in its power to render the Church of Venice a national Church. The Doge officially took part in all the great ceremonies side by side with the Patriarch; these ceremonies, even in their religious aspect, would have been incomplete without his presence. The greatest church in Venice was not the Patriarch's cathedral at Castello, but the Doge's chapel attached to his palace. The Doge's chaplain, the *primiciero*, and the chapter of Saint Mark's, were the most powerful ecclesiastical body in Venice, completely overshadowing the Bishop of Olivolo, in whose diocese they were. On the other hand, no event of foreign or domestic importance to Venice—victory over the Turk or deliverance from plague or conspiracy—could occur, but the Government ordained its commemoration by an ecclesiastical function. And thus the Venetians learned to read the history of their country in the ceremonies of their Church.

So Venice became a city of festivals and processions, in which the people flattered their patriotism and honoured their own achievements. Many of these processions were purely religious, such as the ceremony of Palm Sunday, or of the Corpus Domini, the record of which, in all its splendour and pomp of colour, of golden bier and lighted tapers, of rich-robed priests and sunlight on the mosaics of Saint Mark's, stands blazoned for ever on the canvas of Gentile Bellini. Others were domestic in character,

like the thanksgivings for liberation from the plague on the days of the Salute and the Redentore. Some, again, commemorated turning-points in the history of the Republic, like that procession which the Doge made yearly to San Vio, on the 15th of June, to render thanks that Venice had been saved from the conspiracy of Tiepolo, in 1310. That conspiracy, the most formidable in all Venetian history, more formidable than that of Marino Faliero forty-four years later, was a violent protest against the closing of the Great Council, and the stereotyping of the Venetian constitution as a close and rigid oligarchy.

The little church of San Vio—surely the tiniest in all Venice, and perhaps the oldest, for it dates from the year 917—stands in a campo of its own, opening down to the Grand Canal. It is a beautiful Byzantine building, raised in courses of red and white marble, with a mosaic over the door, and, higher still, one of the few Byzantine crosses that yet remain in Venice. The church is seldom used now—only for Mass once a year; and Elias Howe with his sewing-machine gracelessly occupies the larger part of one exterior wall. But the church was once the honoured resting-place of the Beata Contessa Tagliapietra, a noble maid of Venice, whose pretty story is now almost forgotten, but might have served the pencil of Carpaccio. She lived with her father on the other side of the Grand Canal, and from the very first she showed great piety, and a passion for the service of the Church. In season

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and out of season, the child would steal away to the shrine of San Vio, and remain for hours in ecstasy and prayer. Her father thought such conduct ill becoming in a gentle maid; but, finding remonstrances of no avail, he sent down orders to the gondoliers at the *traghetto* below his windows to refuse his daughter passage. When the child came down to the *traghetto* one day, and found she could not cross, without a moment's hesitation she set foot upon the water, and so, to the amazement of all, she won her way to her favourite shrine, and achieved her place in the hierarchy of heaven.

Most of the great Venetian festivals and processions have passed away with the Republic which gave them birth. Only those survive which have been consecrated in the hearts of the people, and draw their tenacity from the popular life; these are the functions of the Salute and the Redentore, and the processions peculiar to each parish in the city. On its own especial saint's day, each parish church holds its *sagra*, or festival, of the patron, and all the parish is *en fête*. In the early part of the day there is a procession, which makes the *giro* of the whole district, stopping at every shrine to incense it.

Wonderful effects of colour and of grouping these processions make in the clear air of the lagoons. First come the *facchini*, bearing the crosses, banners, candelabra, madonnas seated on their tottering chairs, all the paraphernalia of the church, furbished and

cleaned for the *sagra.* These *facchini* are divided into groups, each group wearing a different-coloured ephod over their work-day clothes; the first are blue, the next scarlet, and the last white; tall, bare-headed, dark-haired men with bronzed throats and bright eyes, that glance up and smile at the windows as they pass slowly along the little calle, staggering somewhat under their various loads. Behind the *facchini* comes the *nonzolo*, or sacristan, alone, in scarlet, a person of importance, who walks backwards, ringing a bell, marshalling the crowd and keeping the boys in order. Then the *musica*, trombone, fife, clarionet, and drum, playing the lightest of airs, and marching gallantly in front of three little acolytes who send up clouds of smoke from their silver censers. Then, beneath a canopy, the old *parocco* in his most gorgeous robes and laces, bearing the Host reverently in his hands, and followed by all the lesser functionaries of his church. Behind the priests come all the pious of the parish: the men first, in black, and bare-headed; then the women, in long black veils. Each carries a lighted taper, held sideways across his breast for fear of the falling wax; and by the side of each torch-bearer walks some one who catches the dripping wax in a paper bag. So the procession passes on through all the winding streets, often delayed, halting here and filling up there, the crowd below nodding up to the crowd above that fills every window and balcony.

The last bridge in the parish is hung with brilliant-coloured mats; there the procession halts, the priest alone under his canopy climbs to the highest point of the arch and raises the Host in air; the music stops; a hush falls upon the throng; each head is uncovered and every knee is bent for a moment or two; while the breeze blows salt and free down the canal, lifting the hair on the kneelers' foreheads, the waters glide persistently by, and above is the thin clear strip of blue, roofing it all from house to house. Then the band breaks into its gayest waltz, the procession returns to the parish church, and the rest of the day is devoted to festivity. In the evening there is usually an illumination in the principal campo of the quarter—extra gas-lamps and Bengal lights. The picture of the saint, with a little oil-lamp before it, hangs out of many windows. Round the fringes of the campo are the stalls of the fruit-sellers; chestnuts *caldi di bogio*, boiling hot, or fried cuttles, or fried puffs of pastry, are the staple fare. The stalls themselves are gorgeous with those huge brass plates so common in Venice; and there is a constant fire of good-humoured raillery passing between buyer and seller, and general laughter follows on some extra witty stroke, for a Venetian's real delight, when in the swing of a holiday, is to draw a laugh. There is dancing, too, in a space cleared in the middle of the square. The lights, the music, the upturned faces, the pleasant-tempered, gay, and joyous crowd,

the scraps of song from the neighbouring wine-shops, all combine to make a stirring scene, only too theatrical in the mixed light of moon and lamps.

These *feste* are entirely popular, and the people enjoy them to the full. 'O benedetto San Luca!' cried a young fellow on that saint's feast, as he embraced his companion in sheer exuberance of heart, and the true Italian delight in lamps and stir and music. The people manage the whole affair for themselves. They elect a *capo*, who gathers subscriptions in the quarter, and, according to the funds he raises, he arranges the scale of expenditure. Sometimes, if they are very well off and the subscriptions come in copiously, the whole affair will close, about half-past twelve at night, with fireworks, rockets, Catherine-wheels, and Bengal lights defining the bridges. Then all the crowd applauds, the *capo* loudest of all, delighted at the success of his own designs; and screaming 'Musica! musica! where is that son of a dog the music?' he plunges away to hurry up the lighted barge of the musicians that comes floating lazily along the canal, as they play the *finale* of 'Viva Italia! viva el Rè!'

# SAN NICOLO DEL LIDO

IT is natural that Venice should possess a church in honour of the patron saint of sailors, San Nicolò di Bari. The church stands at the most beautiful point on the Lido, overlooking the Lido port, by which the warships and the merchantmen of the Republic sailed out to conquer the Mediterranean, and to 'hold the gorgeous East in fee.' Before sailing, and on their return, the crews would land to ask a blessing on their voyage, or to render thanks for their safe home-coming, in the temple of San Nicolò. And near the church was the artesian well whence the ships drew their supplies of water, counted miraculous, for after the longest voyage it remained sweet and fresh as on the day that it was drawn. The church was built in the eleventh century by the Doge Domenico Contarini, about the time that the saint's body was brought from Asia to Italy.

San Nicolò was Bishop of Myra in Lycia; and it is not likely that he became the sailor's saint until the people of Bari, for some unknown cause, were suddenly enamoured of him, and determined to steal his body from its Asian resting-place. Fired by this

pious purpose, three merchants of Bari set sail for the Levant; and after many difficulties and dangers they succeeded in breaking open the bishop's tomb and carrying the relics away to Italy, in the year 1087. At Bari the bishop worked many miracles, and his fame spread all down the Adriatic shore. At that time Venice was not undisputed mistress of the Adriatic, and rivalry between herself and other sea-ports, Ancona and Bari, ran high. The possession of the saint's body was made a test question and a trial of supremacy. Venice claimed the relics, and endeavoured to obtain them by force. She failed in the attempt; but with her accustomed pertinacity she spread the fiction that the saint's body had been really brought to Venice, and the church on the Lido was raised in his honour. San Nicolò of the Lido still watches over and protects the sailors of the lagoon, for his campanile is a sea-mark to those who sail from Istria, and when it is in one straight line with the towers of San Piero and San Marco, then the master knows he has the route to find the Lido port.

The day which the Lido keeps in honour of San Nicolò is not that saint's proper day, the 6th of December, but the day of his translation, the 9th of May. And this change is fortunate, for then this end of the Lido is coming into all the richness of its spring. Long before Sant' Elizabetta and the baths were invented, before the days of steamboats and

tramways, while the path from the lagoons to the sea still led through a tangle of rank sea-grasses that covered the low sand-dunes, whose wildness the brothers of San Lazzaro had not yet tamed to the richest garden lands near Venice,—the shady greenery of San Nicolò was the favourite haunt of the Venetians on a summer's afternoon. It was the custom then to take one's food and sup upon the grass beneath the trees. There is no grass half so green, nor any shade so profound and cool, within miles and miles of Venice. The grass is full of violets, and overhead is the sun-proof shelter of the acacia and catalpa groves. Beyond the groves stretch wide green meadows, bounded by a hedge where the blackthorn blossoms, and watered by lazy-flowing water-courses that counterfeit an English stream; the path that leads from the meadows is flanked by poplar trees, and is deep and cool as an English lane. The sea is shut out on the one side, and the lagoon on the other. The whole scene recalls the midland counties; only here the flowers are richer, and in place of buttercups you find hyacinth and narcissus, yellow and white. Everywhere there is green—green, the only colour that the eye seriously misses and sometimes longs for in the Venetian landscape.

The whole point of San Nicolò has been enclosed by the brick walls of an Austrian fort; and the earth ramparts make a splendid promenade. From that superior height you command Venice on the one side,

its bell-towers and churches composed against their everlasting background of the Alps; the campanile and domes of San Giorgio and the Salute grouped together like the minarets and cupolas of some Eastern mosque. On the other side the Adriatic opens away. If the weather be perfectly clear you may catch the faintest blue indication of the Istrian hills, and follow the mountain chain right round the head of the gulf, by Friuli and the Dolomites, till you lose it again near Monte Adamello in the Bresciano—a sweep of sea and sky and mountains that cannot fail to satisfy the appetite for space. In spring the ramparts are covered by a carpet of grass and salvias and poppies that is Persian in its audacity of colours, green and scarlet and purple, dazzling to the sight.

The approach to San Nicolò is worthy of the place. As you row towards it in spring the scent of the acacia meets you out on the water. From the lagoons the boat passes, under a high stone arch with Saint Mark's lion, half effaced, and the Mocenigo coat on either side, into a long, narrow creek. On the one side is the odorous acacia grove dipping down to the water, and the green of its cool recesses is restful to the senses after the dancing sunlight on the lagoon. At the end of this creek are some broken marble steps, and beyond, an avenue of trees where the hooped and powdered and brocaded ladies may have sauntered and flirted their fans, like any group out of Watteau or Pater. On the other side are the rows of mulberry

trees that are ruthlessly stripped each spring to feed the silkworms; and right in the heart of the mulberry grove is the *Buon pesce*, where one may fare plainly but well. The little house with its pergola of honeysuckle and vine, and its large garden behind, in whose ivy-covered walls the blackbirds build and sing, is all that now remains of an ancient nunnery.

Where the barracks now stand, clustered around the church, there was once a monastery; and the story of one of the brothers who dwelt there is the most picturesque episode in the history of the Venetian cloisters, and most intimately connected with the life of a great Venetian family, the Giustiniani. In the year 1170, the Venetians were at war with the Emperor Manuel I., and the whole family of Giustiniani followed their Doge to the Levant, except one lad Nicolò, who was a monk in the monastery on the Lido. The Venetians took the island of Chios; but, while wintering there, a fierce plague broke out among the fleet, so that the Doge returned to Venice, the following year, with only sixteen ships out of a hundred and twenty. In this expedition all the Giustiniani were killed, either by plague or in battle, and the family seemed doomed to extinction. But the loss of such a vigorous race was deemed a public calamity. The Government therefore petitioned the Pope to release Nicolò from his vows, and to allow him to marry. The Pope assented. Nicolò was formally made a layman once more, and wedded to

the Doge's daughter. They had a family of nine sons and three girls. After re-establishing his house upon this solid basis, Nicolò returned to his convent, where he won such a reputation for holiness that, when he died, the Church bestowed on him the title of 'Blessed Confessor.' His wife founded a nunnery on one of the islands near Torcello, where she ended her days. The people gave her the rank of her husband, and she was afterwards known as the 'Blessed Ann.'

But Nicolò's cloister has long ceased to exist; it is occupied now by the Corpo della Disciplina, the regiment whose ranks are filled by all the troublesome spirits in the Italian army, sent to do penance on the Lido. The convent gardens are a musketry practising ground, and every *festa* the Italian flag flies over the ancient monastery door.

# THE DOVES OF SAINT MARK

In Venice the pigeons do not allow you to forget them, even if one desired to forget a bird that is so intimately connected with the city and with a great ceremony of that ancient Republic which has passed away. They belong so entirely to the place, and especially to the great square; they have made their home for so many generations among the carvings of the Basilica, at the feet of the bronze horses, and under the massive cornices of the New Procuratie, that the great campanile itself is hardly more essential to the character of the Piazza than are these delicate denizens of Saint Mark's. In the structure of the ducal palace the wants of the pigeons have been taken into account, and near the two great wells which stand in the inner courtyard little cups of Istrian stone have been let into the pavement for the pigeons to drink from. On cold, frosty mornings you may see them tapping disconsolately at the ice which covers their drinking troughs, and may win their thanks by breaking it for them. Or if the *borin* blows hard from the east, the pigeons sit in long rows under the eaves of the Procuratie; their necks drawn

into their shoulders, and the neck feathers ruffled round their heads, till they have lost all shape, and look like a row of slate-coloured cannon-balls.

From Saint Mark's the pigeons have sent out colonies to the other churches and campi of Venice. They have crossed the Grand Canal, and roost and croon among the volutes of the Salute, or, in wild weather, wheel high and airily above its domes. They have even found their way to Malamocco and Mazzorbo; so that all Venice in the sea owns and protects its sacred bird. But it is in Saint Mark's that the pigeons 'most do congregate;' and one cannot enter the Piazza, and stand for a moment at the corner, without hearing the sudden rush of wings upon the air, and seeing the white under-feathers of their pinions, as the doves strike backward to check their flight, and flutter down at one's feet in expectation of peas or grain. They are boundlessly greedy, and will stuff themselves till they can hardly walk, and the little red feet stagger under the loaded crop. They are not virtuous, but they are very beautiful.

There is a certain fitness in the fact that the dove should be the sacred bird of the sea city. Both English 'dove' and Latin *columba* mean the diver; and the dove uses the air much as the fish uses the sea. It glides, it dives, it shoots through its airy ocean; it hovers against the breeze, or presses its breast against the scirocco storm, as you may see fish poised in their course against the stream; then with

a sudden turn it relaxes the strain and sweeps away down the wind. The dove is an airy emblem of the sea upon which Venice and the Venetians live. But more than that: the most permanent quality in the colour of the lagoons, where the lights are always shifting, is the dove-tone of sea and sky; a tone which holds all colours in solution, and out of which they emerge as the water-ripples or the cloud-flakes pass—just as the colours are shot and varied on a young dove's neck.

There is some doubt as to the origin of these flocks of pigeons which shelter in Saint Mark's. According to one story, Henry Dandolo, the Crusader, was besieging Candia; he received valuable information from the interior of the island by means of carrier pigeons, and, later on, sent news of his successes home to Venice by the same messengers. In recognition of these services the Government resolved to maintain the carriers at the public cost; and the flocks of to-day are the descendants of the fourteenth-century pigeons. The more probable tradition, however, is that which connects these pigeons with the antique ceremonies of Palm Sunday. On that festival the Doge made the tour of the piazza, accompanied by all the officers of State, the Patriarch, the foreign ambassadors, the silver trumpets, all the pomp of the ducal dignity. Among other largess of that day, a number of pigeons, weighted by pieces of paper tied to their legs, used to be let loose from the gallery

where the bronze horses stand, above the western door of the church. Most of the birds were easily caught by the crowd, and kept for their Easter dinner; but some escaped, and took refuge in the upper parts of the palace and among the domes of Saint Mark's. The superstition of the people was easily touched, and the birds that had sought the protection of the saint were thenceforth dedicated to the patron of Venice. The charge of supporting them was committed to the superintendents of the corn stores, and the usual hour for feeding the pigeons was nine o'clock in the morning. During the revolution of 1797 the birds fared as badly as the aristocracy, and were left to take care of themselves; but when matters settled down again the feeding of the pigeons was resumed by the municipality, and takes place at two in the afternoon, though the incessant largess of strangers can leave the birds but little appetite for their regular meal.

In spite of the multitudes of pigeons that haunt the squares of the city, a dead pigeon is as rare to see as a dead donkey on the mainland. It is a pious opinion that no Venetian ever kills a pigeon, and apparently they never die; but the fact that they do not increase so rapidly as to become a nuisance instead of a pleasure, lends some colour to the suspicion that pigeon pies are not unknown at certain tables during the proper season.

# THE DUCAL PALACE

THE work of restoration has been in progress for thirteen years. It was begun in 1876, when, in the presence of the Queen of Italy, the new base for the 'Judgment Corner' column was laid. The cost of the works up to the present date has been 850,000 lire, or about £34,000, not a great sum when the size of the undertaking is considered. In the office of the works are large designs of the façade on the piazzetta and of the façade on the mole, showing exactly what had been done: how much work is quite new, how much is old work taken out and replaced, how much untouched.

We will begin by stating what work is quite new in both these façades. On the piazzetta, or west side, taking the lower loggia first, the foundations and the bases of the columns all the way along are new; so is the cornice above the arcade upon which the columns of the upper loggia rest. Beginning from the Judgment Corner, the following columns are new:—1, 2, 3, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, and 19, which is the 'Fig-tree Angle' column. The following capitals are new:—10, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19. Several of the capitals, and notably the 'Judgment Corner'

capital, have been strengthened by circling them internally with copper. In the upper loggia on the piazzetta side, only eight columns are new; they are the 13th, 23rd, 28th, 29th, 32nd, 34th, 36th, and 39th. The 4th, 19th, 22nd, 23rd, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 33rd, 34th, 35th, and 36th capitals are new.

On the southern or mole façade, in the lower loggia, the foundations and bases of the columns, and the cornice above the arches, are all new. The new columns, counting from the 'Fig-tree Corner,' but not including the Fig-tree column, which has been already numbered, are 2, 4, 5, 6, 12, 14, 16, and half 18, which is the 'Vine-tree Corner' column. The new capitals are 2, 3, 9, 13, 14, 16, 17. In the upper loggia the following columns are new:—2, 3, 6, 19, 20, 24, 27, 31, 32, 33, and 34; and these capitals, 2, 4, 5, 6, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 33.

The new capitals have been cut from casts taken from the originals; and in every case the workman has had the original before him while employed in carving the new capital. The work appears to have been carried out with affection, care, and patience; and the uneducated eye, at all events, cannot distinguish between the old and the new, except for the dark, smooth patina which time and salt-sea wind and sun have laid upon the older work. Any one who examines the original capitals will be convinced that it was impossible to preserve them in their place compatibly with the safety of the building.

They are cracked and broken into many pieces, with fissures passing through and through them. In many cases this destruction has been caused by the defective way in which the capital was applied to the column. The tops of the original columns on which the capitals were to rest, and indeed all joinings of stone in the old work, show grooves running in towards the centre. These grooves were intended to receive molten lead, which was poured into them so as to fill up any inequalities of surface between capital and column, and therefore to distribute the pressure equally; but in many cases the lead did not reach its destination, leaving hollow spaces where the superincumbent weight has produced a fissure. The original capitals which have been removed are now collected in the courtyard and basements of the palace. They have been clamped and riveted together, and will be preserved in the museum, where artists will still be able to study the original workmanship and compare it with the new.

On the south façade, and in the intersections of four arches of the lower loggia, there are specimens of an incrustation in marble. It is certain that the original design intended these incrustations to be applied at every intersection along the whole façade, for hollow spaces and groovings are left to receive the marbles. But the scheme, whether for artistic or for economic reasons, was never carried out, and the Government does not intend to complete it; so that

the two incrustations remain as specimens of what was meant to be. It is to be hoped that the lion and doge above the large window of the west façade, and the lion above the large window on the south, both of which were removed by Napoleon, will be replaced. The medallion of Venice subduing the stormy sea, which fills the rose above the famous seventh column from the 'Fig-tree Corner' on the piazzetta side, has been refurnished with crown and broach. The crown is of bronze, slightly gilded; and the broach is studded with precious stones which once formed part of the stock of a Venetian jeweller, who failed at the time the restoration was in hand. The stones bear precious names, but their quality is defective, though they glint brightly on the breast of Venice when the sunlight falls along the west façade.

We have now described the restorations of the Ducal Palace which are visible from outside. We must turn to the question, more interesting and structurally more important, of the dangers which threatened the building inside. The enormous weight of the upper story of the Ducal Palace, resting upon the two light colonnades, made the work of underpinning and raising the building, in order to remove the damaged columns and capitals and to replace them by new ones, a serious undertaking. It was especially perilous at the angles. The shorings, upon which the success of the operation depended, were constructed of huge timbers in

such a way that the pressure was borne by them perpendicularly. When they were ready and in place, the building above the column which was to be removed was forced slightly up, and the column extracted, an operation which usually took two days. The substitution of the new column usually required eight days more. When the new column was in place, fine wedges of copper were driven in between the column and the building suspended above it; these wedges were forced in, one after another, until the blow of the hammer on the wedge at the column's head was felt on the battlement immediately above the column; then the shoring was removed, and the building settled down upon the column. This method was followed wherever a new column or capital had to be introduced.

But the two greatest difficulties in the restoration were encountered at the points marked A and B in the accompanying plan. At the 'Vine-tree Angle' at the Ponte della Paglia a most serious settlement had been going on for long. The causes of this dangerous subsidence were three in number. First, the ducal palace is not built on piles; its foundations are laid on a bed of very hard clay, which is generally excellent throughout; but the canal which debouches at the Ponte della Paglia has always had a rapid current, and just at this angle the water has invaded and somewhat softened the clay bed on which the palace stands. Second, for a space of twenty mètres

the wall marked AA was built upon old foundations, supposed to date from the time of the Emperor Otto. These foundations were in themselves defective, and were rendered weaker by the liquefaction of their clay bed. Some attempt had been made to fortify them by placing blocks of stone along them laterally, but of course without effect; and here the most serious part of the settlement took place. Third, the great fire of 1577 calcined the stones and injured the beams which formed the roof of the upper loggia and the floor of the Maggior Consiglio above. The heads of these beams had already suffered by the infiltration of water, and were rotten, more especially the great larch beam at point D, which carried over the upper loggia the *tressa del Paradiso*, the eastern wall of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, for which Tintoret had painted his 'Paradise.'

The restorations recently effected have been as follows. The foundations of the ancient wall from A to A have been taken out, bit by bit, and new foundations put in until the more recent foundations and the firmer bottom was reached. Da Ponte's disfiguring arch was taken down, and in doing so the bases and capitals of two little columns were discovered. These little columns had once served to carry the larch beam of the Paradise wall, before its head was damaged by fire and water. They have now been restored, the original capitals being used; and they may be seen from the mole, cutting the rose between the ninth and tenth arches from the

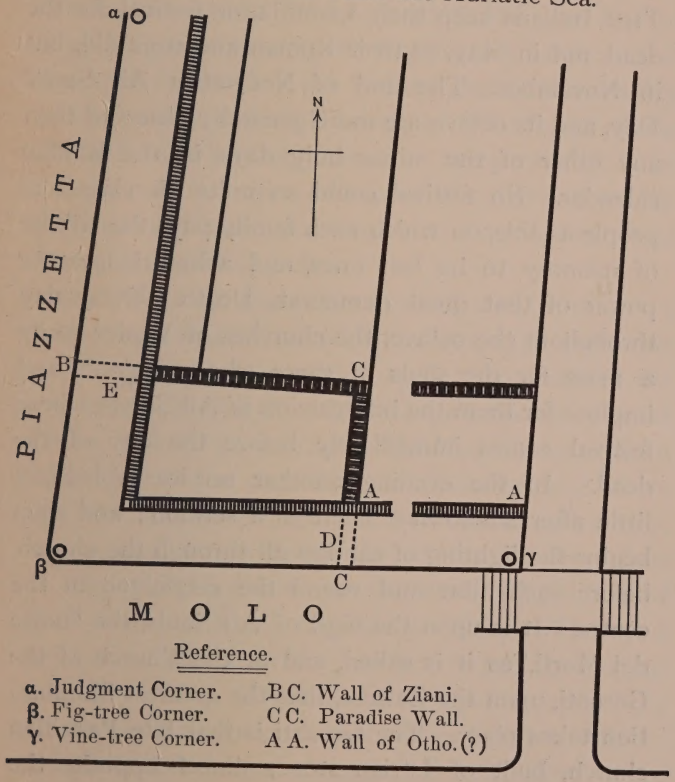
Vine-tree Corner. In place of the old larch beam of 1344, a new beam, composed of four larch beams bound together by iron, was placed upon the little columns; and upon that beam the Paradise wall, where it passes over the upper loggia, now rests. Four great iron tie-rods let into the walls, two running south and north, and two running east and west, hold the corner firm. Further, the wooden beam which ran from Da Ponte's arch to the Fig-tree corner, carrying the damaged beams of the Maggior Consiglio floor, was removed.

The second great difficulty was encountered at point B. Any one who examines the façade of the Ducal Palace on the Piazzetta side will notice that the seventh and ninth columns from the Fig-tree corner are thicker and stronger than any of their neighbours, column seven being much stouter than column nine. This variation is not the result of caprice, for though there is some slight disparity in the thickness of the columns, it is never more than three centimetres—the result of accident and not intentional. The columns were intended to be equal in size, except the angle columns and columns seven and nine. The reason for the greater thickness of these two pillars is that each of them carries a wall which runs east and west, and reaches to the whole height of the building. The wall carried by column nine is not a heavy one; it is a comparatively modern partition wall, forming on the upper floor the southern end of the Sala dello Scrutinio. But column seven

has a very different load to bear. It carries what is conjectured to have been an outer fortified wall of the older Ziani Palace, and is now the southern wall of the inner courtyard, and northern wall of the Sala del Maggior Consiglio. This great wall, where it passes over the upper Loggia, is carried on a beam (E) similar to that which supports the Paradise wall, the beam head resting above column seven. This column and capital were in great disorder, and had to be replaced by new work. The underpinning and lifting of the great Ziani wall, as well as the external upper wall, the removal of the old column and capital, and the replacing of the new, were serious undertakings; and though they were successfully carried out, the operation was a most anxious one. When the new column and capital were in their place, so great was the pressure that the scaffolding could not be taken down again, but had to be cut out.

These works, perhaps one of the most successful restorations ever accomplished, are virtually complete; and the noble building is in a condition now to last for many centuries, and to afford daily pleasure to all the hundreds that pass along its walls. The new work has been carefully discoloured so as to match as near as may be the weathering upon the older work; and it would require a singularly trained eye to distinguish between them. Even Mr. Ruskin, when last in Venice, declared himself satisfied. Both Loggias are now open to the public, and the visitor may wander along the splendid upper colonnades,

past the older Loggia of Doge Ziani, past the columns engraved with the graffiti of many centuries, and the walls encrusted with ducal arms; he may lean upon the balustrade and look across the basin of Saint Mark to San Giorgio, rosy red and white upon the lagoon, and feel, as the old Venetians felt, the salt sea breeze that blows from the Lido and the Adriatic Sea.



# ALL SOULS' DAY

THE Italians keep their Lemuria, or festival for the dead, not in May, as their Roman ancestors did, but in November. The 2nd of November, All Souls' Day, and its octave are more generally observed than any other of the minor holy days in the Roman calendar. No festival could so unite all classes of people as this, on which each family pays the tribute of memory to its lost ones, and acknowledges the power of that great democrat, Death. Every day throughout the octave, the churches of Venice recite a mass for the souls of those who are gone, and implore for them the intercession of All Saints, whose festival comes immediately before the day of the dead. In the evening another service is held, a little after sundown. There is a sermon; and then begins the lighting of candles all through the church, before each altar and round the catafalque in the centre. It is upon the vigil of All Souls, the 'notte dei Morti,' as it is called, and at the Church of the Gesuati, upon the Zattere, that the greatest illumination takes place. The Gesuati is that late Palladian church, built of Istrian stone, almost opposite the

nobler *façade* of the Redentore, and more formally known as Santa Maria del Rosario. The Church is called the Gesuati because hard by—but long before the foundation of this present building, which dates from the last century only—the company of the Blessed John Colombini, which was called the Gesuati, first established itself in the year 1392. Among the other pious duties of the brotherhood was that of supplying and carrying the torches at funerals. And hence it comes that the Gesuati makes this display of light every 2nd of November. The Order of the Blessed John was suppressed in the year 1668; but the Dominicans who succeeded the Gesuati in the possession of their monastery and church, continued the custom of the candles.

Outside, over the main door of the church, is a large black board, and, in white letters, an invitation to all good Christians to pray for the souls of the departed. Round this tablet hangs a wreath of laurel leaves, twined on a black-and-white ribbon. Each other door of the church has a similar garland above it. The sun is setting in a cold and cloudless sky, serene and almost hard. In the zenith the colour is deep blue, but towards the west a thin film of gold is spread where the sun is sinking. The wind comes fine and searching, as it so often does on an autumn evening. The broad and rippled waters of the Giudecca Canal seem as hard as the sky they reflect.

Inside the church, through the open door where

women troop, pulling their shawls up over their heads as they enter, all is dark and gloomy, every column, pilaster, and architrave draped in black cloth with silver fringes; and wreaths of laurel are twined round each pillar's base. The high altar is hidden by a towering cenotaph, raised in the middle of the nave; against its blackness the thin white stripes of the tapers that surround it, stand out clear. The people, chiefly women and boys, scuffle and whisper subduedly as they kneel in rows. The black-walled, black-roofed church seems to enclose and compress them as if in some vast and lugubrious tomb; and their mutterings sound like the gibbering of ghosts. The sermon begins; a voice alone, full of inflexion, passion, forcible cadences, speaking out of the darkness. Though the preacher is invisible, the mind unconsciously and perforce pictures the action that must accompany this strong Italian rhetoric. The voice holds the church; and there is silence in the congregation except for the dull thud of the padded doors as some new-comers arrive. The sermon is not long; only a few rapid passages, and then comes the close. The shuffling and whispering are resumed; and the sacristans begin to light the candles. Through the darkness the little yellow tips of fire move noiselessly, touching the tall wax tapers before each altar, and down the nave, and round the cenotaph in the centre. Presently the church is faintly illuminated by these warm yellow stars, that waver to and fro

in the gloom, but do not overcome it. There is a short hush of silent prayer; then the congregation rises and shuffles out down the steps of the church on to the broad pavement of the Zattere.

The sun has set, the wind died away; the air is mild and clear; the sky in the west is mellowed to a wonderful enamel of molten blue and green and daffodil; and no stars are shining yet. The crowd disappears rapidly; the boys rush off with shouts; the men follow in twos or threes, with long swinging step and conscious manly movement; the women, linked arm in arm, go clattering down the narrow street on their noisy pattens.

On All Souls' Day it is the custom to visit the graves of relations and friends in that grim cemetery of San Michele, whose high brick walls you pass on the way to Murano or Torcello. The church itself is a lovely specimen of Lombardi work, with delicate bas-reliefs in Istrian stone upon the little pentagonal Cappella Emiliana adjoining it. But there is something terrible and sinister in the cemetery itself, where the dead lie buried in the ooze of the lagoon-island. On this day the Venetians carry wreaths to lay on the graves. The wealthier have garlands made of real flowers, but, for the most part, these wreaths are twined out of Venetian beads—red and blue, Madonna's colours, for the women; or black and white for the men, who have no universal patron in the heavens

There is one old custom connected with this festival of the dead which still survives in Venice, and recalls a Latin, or even an earlier, superstition. The pious man in Ovid's 'Fasti' rises at midnight to fling black beans behind his shoulder. Nine times he flung his beans, and then the ghost was laid. The Venetian does not fling away his beans; he eats them. In Venice this custom of eating beans through the octave of All Souls' is extremely ancient. The monks of every cloister in the city used to make a gratuitous distribution of beans on All Souls' Day to any of the poor who chose to come for them. A huge caldron was placed in the middle of the courtyard and the food ladled out to the crowd. The gondoliers did not come with the rest, but had their portion sent down to them at their ferries. This grace was granted to them in consideration of the fact that all the year round they rowed the brothers across the canals for nothing. Indeed, though the custom is almost extinct, they still do so; and you may sometimes see a brown-cowled friar crossing a ferry with no other payment than a pinch of snuff or a benediction. As the Venetians grew more wealthy, true beans became distasteful to the palates of the luxurious, who were yet unwilling to break through the custom of eating them on All Souls' Day. The pastrycooks saw their opportunity, and invented a small round puff, coloured blue or red or yellow, and hollow inside; these they called *fave*, or beans; and these are to be seen at

this time of the year in all the bakers' windows. If a man should happen to be courting at this season, it is customary for him to make a present of a boxful of these *fave* to his lady. But the pious mind has never been quite at ease under this gastronomic deception; and so,—though you may hate beans and keep your hands from them as scrupulously as any pupil of Pythagoras,—should your cook chance to be a good Catholic you will assuredly, about the month of November, have beans set before you for dinner in Venice.

# THE MADONNA DELLA SALUTE

VENICE has never forgotten to be grateful to 'Mary the Mother of Health,' who freed her from her last great plague. Every year, on the 21st of November, thanksgiving services are held in the Church of the Salute, whose group of cupolas and fanciful buttresses and statues form such a wilful and picturesque object, standing, as they do, on the point of the Dogana, and opposite the graver *façade* of Palladio's San Giorgio. The church was built in quittance of a vow made to the Virgin if she would save the city from the plague. The pestilence had raged for sixteen months, destroying eighty-two thousand people in Venice and the neighbouring islands. It stopped suddenly in November of the year 1631, as the winter drew on. The public prayers had apparently been answered, and the vow of the Senate accepted. The joy was boundless, for this plague had been the most terrible of all the seventy which, up to that date, had desolated Venice. Indeed, the city was rarely free from infection; and only fifty-five years before, she had lost as many as fifty thousand inhabitants. Venice had built the votive church of the Redentore

then, as a thank-offering for liberation in answer to her supplication; the Government determined, on this occasion, to raise a still more splendid church. But that could not be done in a moment, and the city was impatient to celebrate a service of jubilee without more delay. Accordingly a temporary church of wood was built upon a piece of land which had been given to the Republic by the Knights Templars; and thither the Doge, the Council, the Senate, the nobles, and the people went on the 28th of November.

The procession started from the high altar of Saint Mark's. When it reached the middle of the piazza a halt was made, while the officers of public health officially declared that the plague was at an end through the intercession of the Virgin. The announcement was received with salvoes of artillery, the blare of trumpets, and the clang of bells. Then the train moved forward through the narrow streets and crossed the Grand Canal to the wooden church by a bridge of boats. The letter of a contemporary tells us that the day was cloudlessly fine; and this long procession filing across the bridge, the priests in their coloured robes, the silver and gold candlesticks, the flags of the various companies, the young nobles in their tight hose and slashed doublets, the elders each with a long white taper in his hand, must have made a picture that Gentile Bellini should have lived to paint. The Senate did not neglect their vow, and, after a public competition, Longhena, a Venetian,

was chosen to build the votive church, which, in spite of its audacity, and taking it for all in all, we cannot help admiring more, the more familiar it becomes.

The Venetians have never omitted this festival. Each year they celebrate their thanksgiving anew, with much the same ceremony as on that first November day, in 1631.

On three occasions only in the year are pontoon bridges thrown across the Grand Canal—on the Day of St. Anthony, the Day of the Redentore, and this Festival of the Salute. The gondoliers of those ferries where the bridges cross receive three francs apiece in compensation for the work they lose. On the Day of the Salute there are two bridges—one for going and one for coming. The crowds that pass backwards and forwards all day are very large, for the inhabitants of Venice, even those who are ordinarily indifferent to the Mass, feel bound to visit the church upon this festival.

From the very earliest morning the tramp of feet begins below one's window, and sleep is impossible. It is best to get up and go with the crowd. The cloaked and muffled throng look dim and ghostly and unwonted in the doubtful morning light, as they stream across the bridges. All round the open space by the church, stalls are set up, and a small fair goes actively forward with the sale of hot fish, coffee, statuettes of the saints in plaster, rosaries, 'portraits'

of Madonna, pamphlets of her miracles, but above all *galletti*, a mixture the Venetians delight in at this season. *Galletti* is made of flour, lard, and white of egg, raised to a froth, like whipped cream, by the yeast that is beaten up in it. They serve it to you in little conical cups of pastry; but those who expect the flavour of whipped cream would probably be disappointed.

At half-past ten the great function takes place. The procession of all the parishes musters in the piazza. The priests of each parish wear different-coloured stoles to distinguish them from one another; and the procession, when seen from the steps of the *façade* as it moves slowly over the bridge, looks like some huge serpent with bands of various hues upon his skin. Inside the church, the devout light the candles they have carried, one taking the fire from another, and press forward after the priests up to the altar rails; there the tapers are handed over to the sacristans and placed beside the high altar, where Madonna stands, triumphing over a figure of the plague. Thousands and thousands of candles are passed over the rails until the whole space by the altar seems like one solid wall of embossed gold as the flames waver and flicker in the draught. In return for their candles and some centesimi, the pious receive a picture of Madonna, which is devoutly kissed and put away inside their shirts or shawls.

Then the long service begins; but this church,

which consists of one large circle under a dome, with a smaller circle attached, to form the choir, is badly built for music, and for the most part the congregation pays little attention. In the body of the church, under the great cupola, the men move about where the crowd will let them, all with their hair brushed, clean shaven, and in Sunday shirts, their huge black hats with the peacock's feathers tucked under their arms. The women sit still and look at them. The Venetian gondoliers are artists in flannel shirts, and this fluctuating crowd is 'a symphony in shirts' set upon figures conscious of their becomingness—black and white checks, mauve, blue, red, and black; and most of the men wear blue scarfs round their waists. The services go on all day long, one succeeding the other, till the final vespers and benediction at five o'clock.

But the Venetians do not end their festa there; they keep it up far beyond midnight; and from the wine-shops and eating-houses come bursts of laughter and of song—'Viva Italia! viva el Rè!' Or later still, towards the small hours of the morning, you will likely be wakened from a first sleep by the notes of an accordion and the lilt of feet that, keeping time to the tune, go swinging down the street below your window. Half in dreams, it sounds like some enchanted air that swells nearer and nearer and then dies away, drawing the senses after it to woodland glade and grove and stream; like some divine chorus

of a Bacchic rout, with laughing voices that accompany it. But dreams are famed for cheating, and this is nothing else than 'Mariannina' and a band of young Venetians who have kept the feast of the Salute late into the night.

WELL AND COURTYARD.

# HOME LIFE[1]

THE home life of the Venetian people is as strongly characterised and as peculiar as everything else in that unique city. No race possesses a more distinctive set of customs, or clings to them with greater tenacity, than the Venetian *popolo*, or *bassa plebe*, as they always call themselves. The isolated position of the city, solitary as it is upon the water and severed from the mainland, assists a natural tendency to individuality which underlies the Italian character, and which finds admirable illustration in the people of Venice. For not only are the customs of Venice, as a whole, peculiar and distinguished from those of neighbouring Italy, but inside the city itself each quarter has some modification of the universal custom; and this modification is special to the quarter, and is cherished as the distinctive badge which differentiates it from its neighbours. The division of the quarters is still strongly felt in Venice. One district speaks of another as a separate nation; there is the nation of San Nicolo, the nation of Castello, the nation of the Giudecca. And the physical peculiarities, and even

[1] In this, and the two following articles, I am indebted to the collections of Sig. D. Bernoni

the dialects of the inhabitants of these various quarters, almost justifies this very pronounced distinction. The men and women of Castello are different in build and type of features from those of San Gregorio; they call their parish church San Piaro, while the people of San Gregorio render their saint almost unrecognisable by metathesising him into Sannegrorio; at Santa Marta there are old women who have never been in the piazza of Saint Mark. The people of the same quarter know each other intimately; the good fortune, the wealth, the misery, the scandal of each family are the common property of all its neighbours, but the interest in it ceases at the frontier of the quarter; beyond that invisible line people have other cares, gossips, scandals, to occupy them. So strong is this sense of union inside the quarter and separation from every other district, that a girl who marries out of her own quarter will talk as if she were going to a foreign country, though her new home may be but ten minutes' walk from her father's house; and a lad pleads thus against the fact that his home is in another quarter from his love's:

'Butite sul balcon e dame un segno,
Ma no badar che sia da Canaregio;
Ma no badar che la strada sia longa,
Che un cuor che se vol ben presto se agionga.'

'Lean out, my love, and smile to me,
And say you will be mine;
And never heed though my home be
So far away from thine.

'Nor never heed the weary way,
Nor do thy love such wrong;
A loving heart will never stay
To think the road is long.'

The life of the Venetian people is governed by ancient and general custom. *Costume* is sovereign in Venice; and the life of one family, in all its externals at least, resembles precisely the life of its neighbour. This *costume* is a rigid law which no one would venture to break. It surrounds and moulds the lives of all; and is maintained by the sanction of a stern criticism, relentlessly applied to all who violate its smallest regulations. This obedience to custom and dread of criticism are the two most potent factors in the daily life of the Venetian people.

It is a matter of surprise to observe the great cost at which this *costume* is maintained, under the dread of *critica*. Custom must often press heavily upon a poor man's purse; yet he bears the burden cheerfully to all appearance, and if he grumbles at all, it is only to his dearest friend and in the recesses of his own home. To see the gondoliers in company upon any public occasion—at a baptism, a wedding, a bank supper, or a day in the country—one would suppose them to be either extremely well off, or else most reckless spendthrifts. As a rule, however, they are not one nor the other. For this lavish expenditure in public is counterbalanced by great frugality at home. In this they are not peculiar, but share in the

general habit of the Italians. In the houses of the upper classes, upon public occasions, you will find magnificence and display of luxury, while the daily private life is perfectly simple, and the comforts—or, as we should call them—the necessities of life, do not exist. So it is with the people; they will willingly spend a hundred and twenty lire as best man or as godfather in order to make a *bona fegura* and to avoid *critica*, while for months after, at home, they will hardly touch meat. Or a man will drink seven or eight litres of wine at a supper party, who at home scarcely touches a *quinto* a day, and, as often as not, is content with a tumbler of lemonade. The gondolier class, and indeed all Italians, are of admirably frugal habits, spending little on meat and drink, and easily satisfied with a routine of food that never varies. They have their weak side, which is a love of display and of fine clothes; indeed among the gondoliers an 'ambitious man' means nothing else than a dandy. When *costume* has to be maintained they never hesitate about the cost. For instance, nothing would induce a gondolier to buy an iron bedstead though he could get one for fifty francs; it is the *costume* to have walnut bedsteads. That his *paron* sleeps on an iron bed is nothing to him; that may be his *paron's* custom, it is not his. And so, if he have not one hundred and fifty francs by him, the gondolier will go without the bed, and wait until he has gathered up that sum.

*Costume* is powerful in the internal economy of the house; but it is in the outward functions and ceremonies of life, in marriages, baptisms, funerals, that its potency is most clearly displayed. A young man's independent life begins only on the death of his father, or on his own marriage. Until one or other of these events takes place, he lives in his father's house, and his earnings, whatever they may be, are added to the family store, in which he will share on his father's death or on his own marriage. This arrangement, besides other natural causes, drives the young men to marry, and early unions are the rule. The audacity with which young people commit themselves to the untried waters of a double life, is as remarkable in Venice as it is elsewhere among the poor. For the women marriage is an undoubted advantage; they go to meet hard labour, it is true, labour that is constantly increasing as the family grows; and there are all the difficulties of the commissariat; but their name is safe, which would not be the case if they remained unmarried, and they secure a position and some slight liberty.

The *costume* which hedges courtship and marriage in Venice is lengthy, expensive, and ceremonious. Love begins in the calle, on the bridges, at the windows of the narrow streets. When the young fellow finds himself *incapricciato*, he has first to discover what chances he may have with the fair; whether she has already a *moroso*; and if not, whether

she will run the course with him. This he does in a dozen different ways—by walking before her house, by giving her good-day, even by singing some night below her windows. If the girl has not a mind to him, he will soon find it out. She will never be at her window, she will not return his salute, or she may sing, *sotto voce*, this verse as he passes her; the first line will be enough for him, for it is in common use to give lovers their *congé*. It runs thus—

'Ti passi per de qua, ti passi indano:
Ti frui le scarpe e no ti ga guadagno;
Ti frui le scarpe e po anca le siole:
No t' aspetar da mi bone parole.'

'You pass by here, you pass in vain:
You wear your shoes and take no gain;
You wear your shoes and eke your feet;
Kind words from me you ne'er shall meet.'

But should he discover that the way is open to him, he is off to his friend; imparts the fact that he is in love, and the two, in their best clothes, call on the father of the girl, and the lover formally asks leave to court his daughter. If the parents are assured of the lad's good intentions, and satisfied with his family and profession, they appoint a certain time, two or three months, during which the pair shall keep company and see whether they suit one another. At the end of this time, if they do not go well together, the matter drops and nothing more is said about it; on the other hand, if the affair prospers,

then the parents of the girl name a day, and invite the lover to sup at their house. The man goes with his own parents and nearest relations, and the two families are formally introduced. After supper the lover demands the hand of the girl in marriage, and makes her a present; the father gives his consent in a little speech on the blessings and the duties of the married state, and all the guests wish the couple joy.

A day or two after the *dimanda* comes the betrothal, or *segno*; another supper at the parents' house; and the lover takes with him the wedding ring and other rings, all of which he gives into the girl's keeping, and the pair receive the names of *novizza* and *sposo* respectively. If after this the girl throws over the man, she has to give him back all his rings and presents; if the man leaves the girl she keeps everything. In the province of Udine the penalties on a jilt are stricter still; for the girl has not only to restore all presents, but has to pay the man for the days he has wasted in courting her, and gives him a new pair of shoes.

After the betrothal, the presents which pass between the pair are all regulated by *costume*; and every *sposo* knows exactly what he will have to provide for. He may, of course, add any others which he pleases; but if he confines himself to the following he cannot be criticised, and will have fulfilled the whole duty of a *sposo*. These presents are: at Christmas, a box of *mandolato* and a jar of *mostardo*, a *confettura* of fruit

and raw mustard seed; on Saint Mark's, a *boccolo*, or button-hole of rosebuds; at Easter, a *fugazza*, or cake; on All Souls', a box of *fave*; and at Martinmas, roast chestnuts. The girl replies by silk handkerchiefs or neckties, embroidered with the lover's initials, or his name, or a rose, or two hearts. On no account must one give a comb, for that is an instrument the witches use; scissors signify a cutting tongue; books or pictures of saints bring misfortune; and any one of these is of evil augury for the marriage. After the betrothal both parties begin to think of the wedding. As in the Highlands of Scotland the wife furnishes the house and brings her husband's shirts, so in Venice the bride is expected to find the furniture for the house; or, if that be too great a tax, at least for the bedroom, which must have a bed of walnut wood, six chairs, two chests of drawers and a looking-glass; this is imperative.

Until his family makes its appearance, a gondolier's house usually contains two other rooms besides the bedroom, a dining-room, or *tinello*, and a kitchen. The *tinello* often has those open beams across the roof which so frequently ornament a Venetian chamber; and the wife takes a pride in hanging to those beams as many copper pots, *pignate* and *secci*, as possible. The more she brings the greater the proof of her family's honour, for these bronze pots are heirlooms, carefully gathered up from generation to generation, and portioned out among the daughters of the house

as they marry off. Besides the bronze pots and caldrons, the wife will also bring, for the *tinello*, rows and rows of pewter plates, which are never used, but stand in shining order on ledges round the room. All this metal work is polished three or four times a year for the great Church festivals, and very bright and splendid the roofs and walls appear after one of these cleanings. There are the table, chairs, sofa, and *credenza*, or sideboard, to add, and the photographs of relations and friends on the wall; and then the interior of a gondolier's house is complete, and this is the part that the bride has to think of before her wedding day.

On the other hand, the bridegroom has to find among his friends his best man, or *compare*—not always an easy task, for the *compare's* duties are onerous, and will not cost him less than one hundred lire if he wishes to escape criticism. The ceremony for securing a *compare* is this: The bridegroom will go to the *traghetto* or to his favourite wine-shop, where he is sure to meet his friends; to one of these he will hold out his hand, and say 'Pare là;' if his friend takes his hand, and replies 'Pare paròn,' then the bargain is struck; if not, the groom must look for another. If the *compare* wishes to make a *bona fegura* and be a *compare cortesan*, this at least he must do: the day before the wedding he must send, not take, to the house of the bride a large box lined with silk and filled with bon-bons, on the top of which must

lie a baby in sugar; along with the box a bouquet of sham flowers and a bouquet of real, and his present to the bride, which should be a brooch or earrings, but not a ring. He must also send six bottles of Marsala, Cyprus, and *liqueur* for the wedding supper and four large candles for the wedding mass. Besides this he has to provide four gondolas for the guests who come to supper, to fee the *nonzolo* of the church, and to provide largess for all the poor who crowd about the doors.

This accumulation of duties renders a *compare* not so easy to find. But when he has been secured the day for the marriage is fixed. It is, almost invariably, a Sunday. The other days of the week are unlucky or unsuitable for various reasons: on Monday you go mad; on Tuesday you suffer; Thursday is the day the witches comb themselves and are loose, and so on. Saturday alone is a good day, and that is reserved for the wedding of widows. The ceremony takes place at the earliest Mass to avoid a crowd and the inevitable *critica*, of which all concerned have such a lively dread. The bride wears a black veil, and the second of her two wedding dresses; the better is kept for the supper and the dance. The groom is dressed in black; he, too, keeps his best and newest for the evening. The *compare* takes the bride; the *sposo* takes the *compare's* nearest female relative, who is called the *comare*; the parents and relations follow; and so they walk to church in the early morning air. The bride, bridegroom, and groomsman kneel at a

crimson-covered faldstool before the altar; the rest of the guests range themselves on either side of the chancel. The Mass is galloped through; the *compare* places the wedding ring on the bride's middle finger; the sacristan gives them the pax to kiss; the register is signed; the priest and *nonzolo* duly feed; the doors are flung open, and the beggar boys shout, 'E viva la sposa!' and the *compare* scatters his copper coins. So, in the same order that they came, the procession returns to the house of the bride.

From the moment that the marriage ceremony is performed the bride is under the immediate charge of the *compare*; he is responsible for her during the day; he must never lose sight of her unless he has consigned her to her mother's care. So the bride returns on the groomsman's arm to her father's house; and all the guests partake of the *rinfresco*—lemonade, coffee, Cyprus, Marsala, and cakes. Then they separate till four o'clock, the hour of the supper.

The supper is ordered at some inn. There are three or four of these inns which lay themselves out especially for wedding suppers. The bridegroom has to pay for eight people—himself and his wife, his *compare* and *comare*, and the fathers and mothers of himself and his bride. Of the other guests each pays his own share; and as many as choose may go, for there are no special invitations issued. The wedding party frequently numbers as many as fifty or sixty. The guests assemble at the house of the

bride, and the order of their going is as follows:— The bride and her *compare*, the groom and the *comare*, the parents of the couple, then the rest of the relations in order of affinity. Each man carries his lady's shawl upon his arm, and helps her into the boat, and then is the moment for criticism, and for each one 'to say his own,' *dire la soa*, as they put it. The bridges and *fondamente* are crowded, so are all the windows that look upon the Canal, and woe to the man who is awkward or tries to enter the *felze* head foremost. At the *osteria* the company disembark in the reverse order, and the newly wedded pass to the supper-room through a long lane of all their friends. They seat themselves at the middle of the table *vis-à-vis*, the elders of each house at the upper end, and the rest where they will. The supper is a serious and long-drawn affair, occupying at least four hours. Like everything else in the wedding ceremony, the dishes are prescribed by *costume*; and they are, *Risi; lesso, manzo e pollo; rosto, pollo co la salata; frittura, de figà e de cervele indorae.* When dessert comes, a huge pyramid of hardbake is placed before the bride; she breaks it open, and out flies a little bird, and all the company cry, 'E viva la sposa!'

Then the tables are cleared away; the music arrives, and fresh guests who have come for the dessert and dancing. The *compare* leads out the bride, and the *sposo* the *comare*, for the first dance; and after that the general company fall-to and dance;

waltzes, polkas, and schottische being the favourites, varied by two native dances, the mirror dance and one that is known as *ohimè*.

The mirror dance is simply one of the familiar figures of the cotillon. A chair is placed in the middle of the room, and the company arrange themselves around, the men on one side and the women on the other. One of the men seats himself in the chair, holding a mirror and a handkerchief in his hands; then one of the women rises, goes and places herself behind the chair, in such a way that her face appears in the mirror. If the man does not wish to dance with her, he wipes the glass with the handkerchief, and the woman goes back to her place amid the laughter of the guests, while another tries her luck. When she has come whom the man desires, he rises, lays down the mirror, the music strikes up, and they waltz together till it stops; when the woman takes her seat in the chair and the dance proceeds from the men's side, and so on alternately. In the dance of *ohimè* the company arrange themselves in the same manner. One man stands up in the middle, and when all is ready he cries 'Ohimè!' (ah me); one of the company demands 'Cossa c'è?' (what is it?) 'Sento dolore' (I am in pain), he replies. 'Dove?' says she; 'nel cuore,' is the answer; 'per chi?' (for whom). Then the man names the woman he wishes to dance with and leads her out to waltz till the music stops. Then the woman takes his

place, and goes through the same process in choosing her partner; and so on.

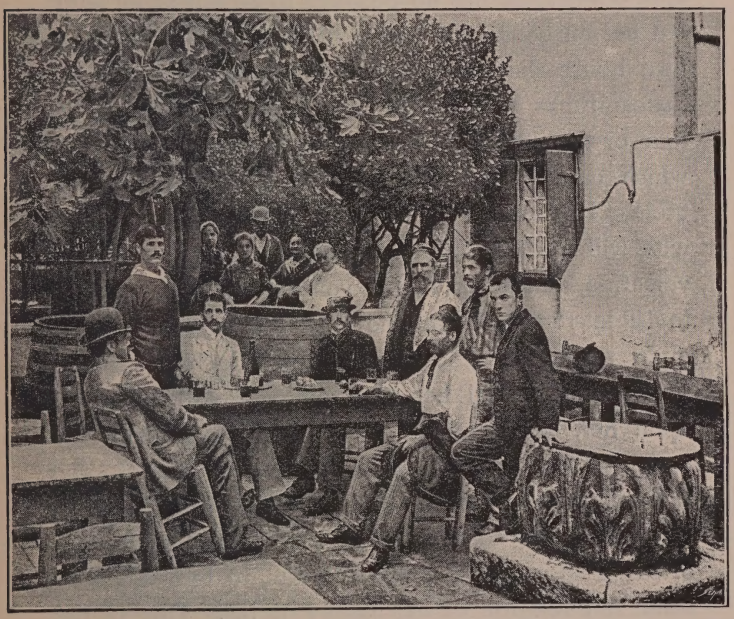
They keep it up till one or two in the morning, and then the whole company attend the *sposi* to the door of their house. There the groom receives his bride from her *compare*; there is endless kissing and hand-shaking, and *buona notte*, *buon riposo* ring down the calle as the last footsteps die away and leave the couple on the threshold of their home.

The *novelli sposi* soon settle down to their new life, he to his work, and she to her household duties and attending on him; for a Venetian wife is distinctly her husband's servant. House rent is cheap in the city of fallen palaces, and for half a franc a day a man can find a house of four or five rooms in a healthy quarter, and in moderately good repair. The food for the couple will be at the same moderate rate until other mouths come to be fed; a man and his wife can live in comfort on a franc and a half a day. Their food is always the same—coffee in the morning and bread; *polenta* and fish, or rice and vegetables at midday; the scraps of their midday meal cold in the evening, and a soup of shell-fish or the fondi of artichokes when they are in season. Once a week only, on Sundays, will they eat meat. They are a frugal people easily pleased. Upon two points alone is a Venetian at all dainty—wine and bread.

The number of different breads in Venice is

bewildering, when you are expected to know one from the other and to have a preference. There is Piave bread, Chioggian bread, *biscotto*, *busolai*, *pane col ogio*, and *pane commune;* but all are excellent. With the wine it is very different. It is almost impossible to find good wine in Venice. The great vintages of Conegliano and Limena hardly reach Venice, and then only in a watered condition. The wine merchants make one pay for these names, and so no gondolier would ever think of ordering them. Besides, red wine will not keep in Venice, and white wine is only good when it is sweet, and if it be sweet the gondoliers do not like it. So that at one time of the year only is it possible to drink good wine; that is immediately after the vintage when the new wine comes in from the country round Padua and the Veronese. Then there is a rush to the wine-shops; and every one is shouting for *nuovo da cinque* or *nuovo da sei*, for at that modest price of fifty or sixty centesimi the litre you may drink the fresh juice of the grape. Very good it is for a while; but it gradually falls away from its primal excellence, and settles deeper and deeper into the depths of watery sourness. It is to be noticed that the professed drinkers dislike the *vino nostrano*, the light wine of the Veneto, and always call for the headier *foresto*, the *bacara* of Brindisi and Bari. The men rarely drink their wine at home. Each one has some *osteria* which he frequents, where he meets his friends,

transacts his business, makes appointments, and may usually be found or heard of. The *habitués* of the place form a sort of club, and a taverner's success depends upon forming and keeping such a *clientèle*. This can be done only by supplying good and



ALLA SPERANZA.

cheap wine, for nothing spreads faster in Venice than the reputation of a wine-shop, or is more quickly lost.

In the evening the wife stays at home, sewing and chatting with her neighbours. I do not know

why the women of the Venetian *popolo* have acquired a reputation for a certain elasticity of morals. The reputation is not deserved nor fairly based. The *costume* of the city has always been in favour of a quasi-Oriental treatment of women. The wife's place is in-doors; she has no business to be out at all without her husband or a very good reason. Even in her own house she will not stay in the room where her husband has his friends to supper unless there be four or five other women to keep her company, in which case they all sit together at the foot of the table. If there are no other women present, the wife will retire to the kitchen, and join in the conversation, at the top of her voice, from that safe and invisible retreat. For the rest, the women of the quarter keep one another in order. Each one knows very well that all her neighbours would be down upon her, and that she dare hardly appear in the streets if she made a notorious false step. So the wife stays at home; and, very likely, until her own children begin to arrive, she will have her mother, or her madonna, her mother-in-law, to look after, or some old relation of her family or his. One of the pleasantest traits in the Venetian character is their affection for old people and babies. It is a beautiful sight to see the tenderness with which these great big fellows carry their infants in their arms. To their coevals they are often harsh, unjust, ready to take advantage, considering that these should be able to

protect themselves; but a child or an old person rarely fails to receive respect and gentleness at their hands.

When the first baby is born, the *compare de l'anelo* appears once more on the scene, and *costume* intervenes again in full force. The groomsman is expected to be godfather to the first child, or *compare de San Zuan*, a relation than which there is none more sacred in Venice. In the absence of the father he is head of the house, or in case of the father's death he is guardian of the children. Two *compari* never pass one another without salute, nor should they go by one another's doors without raising their hat. As soon as the birth of his godchild, or *fiozzo* is announced, the *compare* must send to the mother a pound of meat, a fowl, and two eggs in a box. Then the day for the baptism is settled. The baby is swathed in bands of white linen; round its neck is fastened a charm; and all over its swaddled feet are pinned half moons, hearts, charms, and medals of silver, to keep away the witch Pagana, who is especially on the look-out for unbaptized infants. The baby is laid on a long shallow tray and covered over by a large glass case, which has blue silk curtains round the outside. In this way the *creatura*, as everybody calls it, is carried to church by the midwife, accompanied by its father and its *santolo*, or godfather. Out of three names the *santolo* has the right to bestow two, and one is given by

the Church. The Church always gives the same names, John for boys, and Mary for girls; so every Venetian is either John or Mary, the reason being

GOSSIP AT THE WELL.

that those who bear these names are less exposed to the power of the witches. If the *santolo* stumbles in saying the Creed, then the child that is being

baptized will be liable to see ghosts; and so to avoid such an accident, and also because the *santolo* rarely knows the creed, both the priest and the midwife prompt him, word for word. After the baptism there is the usual *rinfresco*, when the *compare de San Zuan* makes a present to the mother and to his godchild. Then in the evening there is a small supper party confined entirely to relations of the house.

It is a matter for wonder how any babies are reared at all in Venice. The women are so utterly ignorant of the plainest rules, so devoid of the commonest sense, so jealous of their husband's interference, and so sceptical about the parish doctor, that infant mortality is appallingly high. Many a man will tell you that he has eight or ten children; but on inquiry it will turn out that only four or five are living. It seems that quite a half of those that are born die in infancy; and a wife lays her account to lose her first three or four; she informs you quite calmly that it is 'difficult' for them to live. Later on she may become a trifle more careful and experienced, but even so the waste of life is terrible and the dangers that surround an infant immense. If, however, a child does manage to survive black coffee, sour wine, and raw apple, freely administered during its first ten months, which inevitably result in *groppo*, *convulso*, or *riscaldamento*—the three categories under which most ailments fall in Venice,—and escapes the lotions, concoctions, and prescriptions

of the old crones of the quarter, it will probably grow into a fine and healthy man, robust, sane, and happy, thanks to its proved vitality and its resolution to live. He shivers through the cold of winter, and runs about half naked in summer, soaked in sunshine, until it is time to go to school. Every child must go to a government school, or bring a certificate to prove that he is attending some other. Then in a few years comes the ceremony of confirmation, or the *cresema*, by the Patriarch in Saint Mark's, when the boy's *santolo* presents him, and lays his hand on the lad's shoulder while the sacred oil is administered. And again there is a little supper, and party of family friends.

When the boy has reached fifteen, it is time that he should choose a profession, and begin to help the funds of the house. The father may by this time have laid by a little store, though that is hardly likely, for they are not a provident race. If they have sufficient to see them through a year, most of them think that they have done enough in the way of prudence, and leave the subsequent years to take care of themselves ; and by far the majority of gondoliers live solely from hand to mouth, and from day to day, without a single penny laid by against illness or old age. Should a gondolier, however, be the owner of some few hundred lire, we have seen how he disposes of it—lending it out and banking among his brother gondoliers. But if he be the master of a larger sum,

it cannot be disposed of in this small way; and besides, he is sure to be unwilling to allow his neighbours to know that he has any money at all. So

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the lire are hidden away in some secret place in his bedroom, along with his wife's chains and rings. I knew one man who converted all his savings into ten-centesimi pieces, or *palanche*, the most bulky copper

coin he could find ; and kept as much as eight kilos of *palanche* under his mattress. His delight was to count first, and then verify by weighing, this immense heap of penny pieces. If the son of the house escapes conscription, and starts well in his business, he is sure to dislike seeing all his gains taken from him week by week. He will inevitably begin to desire a home of his own ; he will soon enough find a *morosa*, and that will lead him to set up for himself, and to do as his father did before him. And so begins again the quiet round of home life among the people of Venice.

# POPULAR BELIEFS

THE popular beliefs of any people are not easy to discover. In so far as they are vital and real, they are held almost unconsciously, and the people, if pressed, hide them away from the inquisitive; when they cease to be vital they are soon forgotten. In Venice the people are superstitious; but their superstitions have a character of their own; they are quaint, fanciful, or even ridiculous, rather than terrible. That grim quality which distinguishes the popular beliefs of the Highlands or the Southern slopes of the Alps is, for the most part, absent. The landscape of Venice is *suave*, and the Venetian temper is bright and practical, and not deeply imaginative; horrors of actual life appeal to it and fascinate it, but horror is never raised by the imagination into the region of weird fancy which distinguishes Northern legendary lore. The grim imaginative touch is foreign to the Italian temper generally, and Venetian popular beliefs share the common character which marks the Italian treatment of the preternatural.

It is among the old women that these superstitions chiefly survive; it is they who keep up the tradition.

The men, owing to their practical habit of mind, and also to their contact with life, are usually contemptuously sceptical. It is curious to observe how the old crones gathered round a doorstep in a little street, foretelling some disaster or justifying one, will cease to talk if a man pass by. In fact, the women like to keep their knowledge on this subject as *arcana*, and while all goes smoothly the men leave them alone; but some unexpected stroke of good or bad fortune will fling the men back into the arms of superstition, and then the women have their day.

Many Venetian superstitions are to be found among the popular beliefs of other countries. Thirteen, for example, the number of Judas, is always unlucky. To spill salt is the sign of a quarrel, which must be avoided, as in Scotland, by throwing a pinch over the left shoulder. The moon, of course, is a potent agency. Hair grows and falls with the waxing and waning moon; and to turn your money in your pocket at the first quarter will make it increase during that month; but the custom of wishing when one first sees the new moon is not among Venetian superstitions. The common belief that the child who handsels a font is doomed to misfortune is shared by the Venetians. Marks on the finger-nails mean gifts, as they do in Scotland. Those who have an **M** clearly defined on the palms of their hands are safe and lucky; for it is the initial and the signature of the Madonna. The dew-fall on a certain night confers

beauty, and makes the hair grow fine and long; but the propitious time is not the first of May, as with us, but the eve of Saint John. The Venetians have this rhyme on the subject—

'"Anema mia da la zuca pelada,
Quando te cresserà quei bei capeli?"
"La note de San Zuane a la rosada,
Anema mia de la zuca pelada."'

'"Soul of me with the shaven pate,
When will the hair grow, when will the hair grow?"
"On the night of Saint John, when the dew falls late,
Soul of me with the shaven pate."'

The Venetians share with the Greeks the belief that a child about to be born is physically modified by the objects which its mother has constantly before her eyes; and hence the custom of painting the ceilings of the bedroom with angels, and hanging saints upon the walls, just as Greek mothers used to keep little statues of the gods in their bedchambers. This custom also is recorded in popular rhyme—

'Sia benedetta l'arte del pitore,
Ch'el m'à depento la camara mia;
El m'à depento la camara e el leto,
El m'à depento un anzolo parfeto.'

'Now blessings on the painter's art,
Who painted me my room to my own heart;
Who painted me my bedroom and my bed;
And a fair angel right above my head.'

A mother who dies within forty days of her child's birth, completes the number of days that may be

wanting to make up the forty under the robe of the Madonna; and after that she goes to the place that destiny has appointed for her.

On the subject of dreams the Venetians differ from us. They do not hold that we recall 'those dreams which come just ere the waking,' but rather that if one awake from a dream and look out and see the dawn, then one will never be able to remember that dream again. Dreams are so important in the conduct of life, and it is so dangerous to lose one, that this belief may in part account for the universal custom of sleeping with the outer shutters closed.

A curse has only a limited area of operation. The Venetians say that a curse will go

> 'Three days one way, and three another,
> And then recoil upon its author;'

but, as every one has his evil hour in each day, if the curse light on him in his evil hour it takes effect. A blessing, on the other hand, has power to pierce through seven walls and reach its object.

The omens of death are many and various. Any cross of wood, or anything resembling a cross, must be avoided. The Venetians say misfortunes come by threes to make a cross; and I remember a Venetian servant refusing to lay a dinner-table shaped like a **T**; and, on being pressed, he told me that a cross was a call on Death. That shiver which we know as gooseskin, the sign that some one is passing over your grave, is, to the Venetians, the sweep of

Death's wings about his work. To lean upon the door with a hand on either lintel is to call Death in. A guest who crumples the cloth before him at dinner will never come again to that table. To say you are content is a sign you are ready to go; and if the clock strikes as one asks the hour, that is a death-knell.

Certain days have their peculiar superstitions. On New Year's Day new ashes bring new luck, so the first fire is lighted on a clean hearthstone. On that day much depends upon the person whom you meet first on going out; a man or a humpback brings good fortune for the year; a woman or a lame person is an omen of misfortune; and a priest is the sign of death within the year. On Epiphany the beasts talk, the only day in the year that they can do so. In Lombardy the belief obtains that on Christmas Eve the cock cries, 'Christ is born.' The ox asks, 'Where?' The sheep replies, 'In Bethlehem, in Bethlehem;' and the donkey says, 'Let's go! let's go! let's go!' The dew on Saint John's Eve is precious; and Holy Saturday is the most favourable day for teaching babies to walk.

Animals and plants come in for their share of popular beliefs, though only to a small extent, as might be expected in Venice, where both are rare. The scorpion is a beast of wisdom: and centipedes bring good luck, as they do everywhere in Lombardy and Piedmont. Black flies are adverse, and yellow flies, by which are meant bees and wasps, are pro-

pitious, and mean that the *padrone* is coming home. Ants are the bringers of wealth. The oleander is never lucky; like the sage of the Bedfordshire gardeners, when it begins to die the fortunes of the house go with it. Rue, on the other hand, is a plant of good fortune, and has not the sombre significance it bears with us.

These are some of the lighter beliefs which lie near the surface of Venetian popular life. But under these there exists a whole series of superstitions of a graver kind, connected with ghosts, witches, and angels. Even in this region, however, the Venetian imagination never touches the truly grim and terrible; it revolves rather in the region of the fantastic and *bizarre*.

Those who have power to see ghosts are limited in number; they are the children whose godfathers have stumbled over the Creed at their baptism; but precautions are taken to avoid this accident, and it rarely occurs. The ghosts themselves, who have the power 'to visit the glimpses of the moon,' are also limited. They are those spirits who are in purgatory; those in heaven or in hell are barred from all appearance on the earth. These limitations reduce Venetian ghosts and ghost stories to very scanty numbers. Yet the dread of ghosts is lively, and the Venetians are scrupulous never to say anything that may offend the dead. The belief prevails that on the vigil of All Souls' the dead leave their graves in the island of San Michele and cross the lagoon to the city. They pass

in procession through every street, and as each ghost arrives at his former home, he enters and seats himself, unseen, by the kitchen fire. It is of the worst possible luck for one who has the power to see ghosts to be looking out of his window when the ghostly train goes by. But the ghosts which most persistently haunt the earth, are the spirits of those who have hidden some treasure, and forgotten to tell their heir before they died. Such ghosts are always long and white. They appear at Avemaria, near the spot where their treasure lies concealed. A great fortune may fall to him who has the courage to question one of these ghosts. You draw near to him, and ask him what he wants; then the ghost will sign you to go first; but you must reply, 'No! go thou first.' Then the ghost will lead you to the place where the treasure is hidden, and point to it with his foot, and disappear. Besides the ghosts of the dead, the Venetian spirit world contains fays and goblins, *fade* and *massarioli*; neither are noxious, and confine their action to tricks and pranks.

The belief in witches is still alive in Venice though hidden away, and chiefly confined to women. In most quarters of the city there are certain families who have the reputation of being hereditary witches; and it is not uncommon for those who have been robbed, or crossed in love, or have other cause for hatred, to consult these witches to the undoing of their enemy.

October is the witches' favourite month; and on Thursday nights they comb their hair and preen themselves, and Friday is their field-day. It is only on Christmas-eve that new witches can be made. The witches assemble in the house of their chief; the novice is introduced and placed before a looking-glass; then three words, which witches only know, summons the demon and the pact is made and signed. Once a witch always a witch. No witch can die while pictures of the saints are on the wall. The demon draws them away, but they cannot go until the saints are turned with their face to the wall, and then they die in peace. Their chief delight is to make long journeys between midnight and cockcrow. They unchain the gondolas and put to sea; and Alexandria is their favourite destination.

The methods of bewitching are many, and are chiefly exercised upon children. If the witch Pagana be really older than the Christian rite of baptism, she has been completely modified by that ceremony; she is the witch that lies in wait for children on the way to the font, and tries to make them hers before baptism, and while they are therefore pagans still. Children may be spellbound by a look, by a kiss, by fruit and sweetmeats, by bread and wine. But the most effective and terrible way is this: the witch procures the hair of the person to be bewitched, and with this hair she binds a scorpion and buries it in a pot full of sand, which must be covered with earth,

and the spell pronounced; as the scorpion slowly dies so the bewitched likewise. Or the witch may take the heart of a fowl, and binding it round with the lock of hair, she stabs it with needles and utters her spell. Combing the hair plays a large part in Venetian witchcraft, as it does in witchcraft generally; and that is why combs are such an ill-omened present, and why the mother will always gather up all her children's hair when it is cut, that none of it may fall into the witches' hands. Why combs should be of such importance is not quite clear, unless it be owing to their connection with hair. But hair has always been considered as the repository of virtues and powers, from the days of Samson and the sect of the Nazarenes; possibly because of its great electrical vitality.

There are various ways of escaping bewitchment. Salt thrown after the witches makes them fly. A cross on the doorstep will prevent their entering the house; and many Venetians mark a cross on the top of their *polenta* before it leaves the pot, that witches may have no power on it. The names of John and Mary are preservatives, as also the prayer of the Magi. The sign of Solomon, a pentacle made thus, , when used with a certain spell, gives its creator power over spirits, witches, storm, and lightning. But supposing these preservatives have failed, then there is this method by which a child may be freed

from the power of the witch: the clothes of the bewitched are placed in a dry caldron over a fire; as the clothes consume, the witch is compelled to come to the door and ask for salt, or water, or some such thing; if this be given her, then the spell is broken.

Besides ghosts and spirits, angels also, according to Venetian superstition, visit our earth; but children only are able to see them. There is a class of angels, called the angels of the hours, who carry up to heaven each sixty minutes and all its actions, to be judged; but these no one can see, though some may hear the rustle of their wings.

The Venetians are fond of stories and story-telling. The fishermen of Chioggia, rowing home through the summer night, beguile the way with endless tales of Angelica, and Orlando, Astolfo and Ruggiero, and all the pageantry of the Carolingian myth, and the *Reali di Francia.* On summer afternoons in the public gardens you will find groups of men lying prone upon the ground, apparently asleep, but really listening to an old man telling his story in their midst, and to whom they will give two centesimi before they go. For the most part these stories are legendary and fantastic; but there is one which has impressed itself most deeply upon the popular imagination; every Venetian knows it, and it has become proverbial. The story of the Morte Innocente, or the *buon' anima del fornaretto,* the baker's boy of pious memory, as he is always called, is a true story of the year 1507.

It happened thus:—In one of the narrow streets of Venice two men met and quarrelled; one drew a dagger and stabbed the other to death; he then fled, and as he fled, he threw away first the dagger and then the sheath. Presently a baker's boy came by, and he, quite innocently, picked up the sheath and went towards his home. As he was going the police arrested him. They had found the murdered man and the dagger. The sheath belonged to the dagger; so the baker's boy was tried, condemned, and executed. Not until too late was his innocence proved; and the authorities could do nothing except to place the two little lamps on the south-west side of Saint Mark's Church, which burn there now, day and night, in memory of the Morte Innocente; and the people firmly believe that this is the explanation of those constant and mysterious lights. The story of the baker's boy is always quoted as a warning against too hasty judgment, and as a proof of the fallible nature of evidence. A tragedy has been based upon this episode, and may sometimes be seen at the people's theatre; it is called, 'The Venetian Baker Boy,' but this is almost the only tragic story which is common among the people. For the most part they delight either in grisly horrors of actual life, or else in pure romances, to which they will listen for hours together with a satisfaction which neither familiarity nor wearisome lengthiness have any power to abate.

# POPULAR POETRY[1]

THERE is a marked difference between the popular poetry of the north and that of the south. In the north the imagination of the people takes a narrative form, and runs into legends, as in our own border minstrelsy, or in the great Germanic cycles of the Carolingian or Nibelungen legends, which are sustained, dramatic, and created by an inspiration that is external to the poet. But the popular poems of the south are chiefly occupied with the expression of purely personal emotions, love, hatred, remorse, or piety; they are brief, condensed, and concern the singer only. They are the songs of a people who have never had a feudal system, with its passions of kinship and of loyalty to a chief—who have never felt that they were natives of one country in whose history each has his part to take. It is the poetry of individuals, not the poetry of the tribe, or clan, or nation. This is the characteristic of Italian popular poetry, including the popular poetry of Venice.

[1] The renderings of the popular songs which I have attempted in this paper are not intended as literal but as 'impressional translations.' They aim at giving, as far as I have been able, my impression of the author's mood, rather than at reproducing his actual words.

What are the qualities, then, which constitute the charm of this Italian popular poetry, as distinguished from the poetry of culture; which render it fascinating and delightful in spite of absent art? This kind of poetry is, above everything, direct, simple, and true to the inspiration which created it; it is amateur, not professional. Like lover's messages scribbled upon a wall, these popular songs are genuine heartbursts of emotion, with all the passion of their creator quick and burning in them. The inspiration which dictated them comes pure and native, unsupported by artifice; and when that inspiration ceases the song ceases along with it, for the poet of the people does not write for writing's sake, but only as an outlet for superabundant feeling. Art is not an end for him; expression is. In the poetry of culture the germinal emotion is also present, but it is taken and spread out, placed in various aspects, artfully manipulated, sustained by passages that are not inspired, and which are valuable only as a background to the truly emotional lines. In the poetry of the people the germinal emotion is thrust out and left; for the author's object was not to produce a work of art, but to obtain relief from overmastering sensibility. The poet of the people creates the gem; the poet of culture creates the gem and sets it. There is no fatigue of art, on the one hand; but on the other, there is no sustention. The living phrases, charged with all the passion of a human heart, fall like

thunder drops, large and solitary upon the pavement. The emotion crowded into a single line of a people's poet would often suffice to carry a poet of culture through a whole poem. But the uncultured singer is content when he has discharged his soul; when the inspiration fails him he hurries anyhow to a close, careless of bathos and indifferent to finish. And so Italian popular poetry must chiefly be a poetry of inspired lines and phrases, and nothing more. These lines are an end in themselves to the people's poet, discharging his pent-up emotion; to the poet of culture they would not be ends in themselves, but rather parent lines for continuous poems whose goal would be artistic perfection. This is the charm of this popular poetry, that there you find direct, spontaneous, undiluted passion, showing itself for what it is worth and nothing more; concealing none of its force, nor pretending to more power than it possesses.

Italian popular poetry being of this nature, we should expect to find its poems brief and almost epigrammatically pointed; for the poet is limited by the strength and endurance of his emotion, and writes only while that lasts. In the popular poetry of Venice this condition of brevity is fulfilled. The Venetians, sharing with all other Italians the form-giving instinct of their race, have preserved a mould or type for the expression of their emotions, brief but adequate. This original type, common to the poetry

of Sicily, Tuscany, and North Italy, is the villotta, or quatrain. But though the villotta is the parent mould for the popular songs of Italy, it has received different treatment in each of its domiciles. In Tuscany a *coda*, or *ripresa*, of indefinite length and usually constructed in couplets, is often added; while in Venice the quatrain has been preserved without additions, for the most part. It is possible that the exigencies of the Venetian music, to which the villotte were sung, compelled this rigidity of the ancient form; whereas the Tuscan chaunt may have allowed the villotta to be supplemented by a *coda*. However that may be, the vast majority of Venetian poems are villotte, quatrains with three lines rhyming and one—either the second or the third—dumb. This is the true form of the villotta; but it is not rigidly maintained; and we occasionally find the quatrain composed of two couplets. If the poet's emotion is powerful enough to exceed the limit of four lines, another quatrain is added, and the two are frequently constructed like the opening quatrains of a sonnet. There is some reason to suppose that the villotta is a native of Friuli, or La Patria, as it used to be called by the dwellers in the lagoons; but it spread throughout Italy, and became thoroughly domiciled in Venice in its present form. The villotta is intended to be sung in company as the guests sit round the table after supper. One begins, sings a whole quatrain, and then his next neighbour takes

the singing up; and so the song passes round the table, each one singing a different quatrain, though the tune never varies. The tune is a sort of long, slow chaunt, like that one hears sung by the peasants among the olive groves of Tuscany.

Not only does the popular poetry of Venice share its form with that of Tuscany and Sicily, but many of the poems themselves are common to the other two poetic centres, though it is almost impossible to state their actual birthplace with any certainty. It must be said at once that the popular poetry of Venice is inferior to that of Tuscany or Sicily. The Venetian is not so deeply passionate as the Tuscan; his songs are therefore less sustained, briefer in quantity, often less condensed in emotion. But some of the lines created and formed by the passion of the singer possess a breadth and suavity which could not well be matched outside Venetia. This line, for instance, may be quoted—

'O mariner, o zoventù del mare.'

Or this—

'Belo xè el mar, e bela la marina.'

Or this—

'La gran bela presenza, e'l gran bel tratto,'

which has the width and sweep of Tintoret's manner, and recalls some splendid portrait of the Venetian school, Gattamelata perhaps, or Giorgione's knight in armour of our National Gallery. This is a sadder

and a graver song, the first line of which reminds one of Leopardi's famous phrase—

'Piangi, che ben hai donde,'

and is quite as fine in expression.

'Sospira, cuore, che ragion tu hai,
Aver l'amante e no vederlo mai!
El sospirar vien dal ben volere:
Desiderar e no poder avere.'

'Sigh, heart of mine, good cause hast thou to sigh;
To love thy love and have him never nigh.
The source of sighs is love, the heart oppressing,
Desiring to possess and ne'er possessing.'

This is a good instance of the inevitable inequality of a popular poem, owing to its absolute dependence on emotion, and to the absence of art. There can be no comparison between the first and last lines and the two middle lines of this quatrain. On the whole, however, the Venetian popular poems are less deeply felt than the Tuscan. There is a touch of practicality about them and common sense; but they are seldom grim or gloomy: those qualities are foreign to the Venetian temper. The pain and melancholy of love rarely find expression; and the passion is treated in a far lighter and gayer spirit than in Tuscany. The common burden of the unfortunate lover is, if not this one then another. As in their popular beliefs, so in their popular poems the Venetians show a fancy that is gentle, gay, and quaint, as in the following:—

'El mio moroso ga de nome Piero,
Quelo de le tre rose su'l capelo;
Una per mi una anca per elo,
Una per la belezza del capelo.'

'My lover's name is Piero, that is he
Who wears upon his hat the roses three;
There's one for me, and one for him,
And one to make the hat look trim.'

Or else utterly fantastic, as in this—

'In mezo al mare ghe xè 'na fontana:
Chi beve de quel aqua se inamora,
El mio moroso ghe n'à bevuo un goto,
E per amor el xè deboto morto.'

'In the mid sea there is a fountain welling;
And whoso drinks thereof is made Love's prey;
My love hath drunk one glass, his thirst compelling,
And straight, for love, to death he pines away.'

There is a whole series of these fantastic villotte beginning, 'In mezo al mar;' their recurrence shows how the sea affects the Venetian fancy, not by its beauty, but as the home of strange things that could not be on land. Here is another which has a touch of grimness in its hatred:

'In mezo al mar ghe xè un camin che fuma,
Drento ghe xè el mio ben che se consuma.
El se consuma l'anima e anca el corpo:
L'ò visto vivo e lo vôi vedar morto.'

'A smoking chimney stands in the mid seas,
And there within my love is punishèd;
His soul and body waste by slow degrees;
I've seen him living, and would see him dead.'

The field covered by the popular poetry of the

Venetians is not a wide one. The Laments, which in Lombardy and Tuscany contain the larger part of the historical allusions, are wanting in Venetian poetry. The sole historical reference is to the Turk, and the dread that he may one day be at 'the two towers' of the Lido port. And this is not peculiar to Venice, but is to be found in Sicilian poetry as well. The Turk was apparently used as a bugbear to frighten children, much as the French were at the time when they threatened England, or the Russians during the Crimean War. Nor do the Venetians appear to feel all the beauty of their home. The sea has little charm for them; perhaps they know it and its perils too intimately. However that may be, the sea awakens strange and fantastic thoughts, but seldom any delight in its beauty. Yet the Venetians are fully alive to the other great element in the landscape of their lagoons. The sky and all its manifold transformations, the struggle of the winds, the massing and bursting of storm-clouds, the rainbow, the moon and stars, appeal to their fancy; and when they speak of these operations of nature, their language is the language of imagination. The perpetual struggle between the scirocco and the tramontana is an airy battle, with the whole heavens as the field of war. The fate of the clouds arouses pity, driven from the sea to the mountains that will not receive them. The rainbow is a bridge built by a master hand; the moon, an immortal wanderer 'viaggia

sempre è no riposa mai.' The stars are *bei segreti*, beautiful secrets; the pole-star is the type of constancy and the sailor's hope.

'Tutte le stele prende el so camino,
La tramontana no se move mai:
E se la tramontana se movesse,
Bravo quel mariner che naveghesse.'

'Of all the stars each single one
Doth take its wonted way;
The northern star 'tis that alone
Burns steadfastly alway.
And if the northern star begins
To wander like its peers,
Brave mariner is he who wins
The port, and homeward steers.'

Many of the songs contain proverbs, and are of a gnomic character; as this—

'L'amor xè fato per chi lo sa fare.'
'Love is for the lover who knows how to make it.'

Or this fine idea—

'La note xè la mare dei pensieri.'
'Night is the mother of thoughts.'

Or this—

'La legna verde no farà mai bampa.'
'Green wood will never blaze.'

Or this, on the power of Time—

'Col tempo i muri e marmori se spezza;
Col tempo i cuori amanti se rinova;
Col tempo le montagne riva al basso;
Col tempo vinserò quel cuor de sasso.'

'O time will wear the hardest stone,
And time will heal the hearts of lovers;
And time will bow the mountains down,
And melt the heart that cold breast covers.'

Others embody the advice of old women to young; and among these we find the perennial, 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,' clothed thus in Venetian form—

'Marìdite, marìdite, donzela,
Che dona maridada è sempre bela:
Marìdite finchè la fogia è verde,
Perchè la zoventù presto se perde.'

'Marry ye, marry ye, while ye may,
The lass that is wedded is fair alway;
Marry ye, then, while the leaves are green,
For the flower of youth soon withers, I ween.'

Or this against women's perfidy—

'No te fidar de l'albaro che piega,
Nè de la dona quando la te giura.
La te impromete, e po la te denega;
No te fidar de l'albaro che piega.'

'Trust not the mast that bends;
Trust not a woman's oath;
She'll swear to you, and there it ends;
Trust not the mast that bends.'

Or this, that beauty is of no avail against an adverse fate—

'La bela se confida su le belezze,
Cossa val esser bela e no aver grazia?
Cossa esser bela e aver le bionde drezze
Co s'è soto'l destin dela disgrazia.'

'The fair one fears not fate, for she is fair;
What worth 's in beauty if we be not happy?
What worth 's in beauty or in golden hair,
If fate decrees our destiny unhappy?'

Or this, a warning against love in a vacuum, the *amor di sogno*, so perilous to imaginative temperaments—

'La bruta cosa, inamorarse sole!
Perchè la fantasia va tropo in alto;
E la va in alto, che la riva al sole:
La bruta cosa, inamorarse sole.'

'To love unto one's self alone
Is folly, rest assured;
For fancy, if it once hath flown,
Can be no more immured;
Nor of its plumes a single one
Be plucked to stay its flight;
It wings its way into the sun,
Is burned, and then good-night.'

This poetry of the Venetian people is full of references to the popular life. The factions of the Nicolotti and the Castellani have each their songs in praise of themselves and disparagement of their foes. The profession of baker is in favour with the women, for the wife of a baker will never want bread; the calling of sailor or fisherman is in disfavour, for they never stay at home; the gondoliers apparently *son tutti traditori*, are all of them traitors; a verdict which sounds like a too hasty generalisation from a special case. These pictures of calle-life are vivid and true; the girl, for instance, thanks the stonemason who made the window whence she can see her lover—

'Sia benedetta l'arte de Matio!
M'à fato 'na finestra a modo mio;
No'l me'l'à fata nè alta, nè bassa,
Che vedo lo mio ben quando ch'el pass.'

'Now blessings on Matteo's kindly art!
He's made a window after my own heart;
He has not made it me too low nor high,
And so I see my love when he goes by.'

Or else she hears his footsteps below in the street at night—they sound so loud between the narrow walls—and recognises them—

'Se quel che passa fusse l'amor mio,
Certo che a la finestra me trarìa;
Se'l fosse un zovenoto che me amasse,
Dal caminar mi lo conossarìa.

'Oh! an he were my true love,
That's passing down the street,
I'd hasten to the window,
His eyes with mine to greet.

Oh! an he be my own lad,
I love before them all,
I'll know 'mid a hundred, by
His musical footfall.'

The windows are favourite places for love conferences; and so the lover below in the street at night says, 'Deh! vieni alla finestra.'

'Butite a la finestra, a la finestra;
Se ti è in camisa, meti la traversa;
Metite el fazzoleto su le spale,
Che l'aria de la note te fa male.'

'Come to the window, come, my love,
But wrap thy shawl around thee,
Close to thy breast, my darling, lest
The air of night should wound thee.'

The girl has to stay at home, threading Murano beads, while her lover goes to sea—

'El mio moroso da lontan ch'el sia,
Lu xè in mar e mi so a casa mia;
E lu xè in mar, ch'el spiega le vele,
E mi so a casa, che impiro le perle.'

'How far away's my love from me;
I stay at home, he sails the sea.
He sails the sea, his sails are spread,
I stay at home the beads to thread.'

From her window she sees him sail—

'Me trago sul balcon, vedo Venezia,
E vedo lo mio ben che fa partenza;
Me trago sul balcon, vedo lo mare,
E vede lo mio ben a navegare.'

'My window ledge hangs high above,
All Venice lies below;
I see my dear, my only love,
Set sail and seaward go.
I lean upon the window sill,
The sea spreads far away;
I watch the lad who loves me still
Steer bravely on his way.'

She calls a blessing on the boat—

'Sia benedetto l'albaro e l'antena,
La barca del mio ben e chi la mena;
E chi la mena e la sa ben menare;
La barca del mio ben sa navegare.'

'Now blessings on the yards and mast;
The boat my love's aboard, O,
With swelling sail and sheet hauled fast,
He's lord of all aboard, O.'

She begs him to send a message from Malamocco just before he leaves the lagoon and puts to sea; and she asks the sailor that she meets for news of him. He is afraid that she will not marry a sailor; but he has painted her picture upon his sail:

'Sei nata bela e no te posso amare;
L'arte del mariner me meto a fare.
Depenzar mi te vôi su le mie vele,
E in alto mare te vogio portare.
I me dirà, che insegna la xè questa?
Amor de dona me la fa portare,
Amor de dona e amor de donzela;
Altra non amo se non amo quela.'

'Yea, thou art fair; and yet how can I love thee?
A sailor I must be; that will not move thee;
Not though I paint thy form upon my canvas,
And sail the open seas with thee above me.
They'll say to me, What ensign dost thou carry
This is love's ensign; and 'tis love obeying
I sail the sea, my own true love displaying;
This is the lass I love and long to marry.'

Then she sees him sailing home again—

'Me buto a lo balcon, vedo che piove,
Vedo l'amante mio spiegar le vele,
Spiegar le vele per intrar in porto:
Xè vento da garbin, no da scirocco.'

'I lean upon the window ledge,
And watch the rain come down;
I see my love who hath my pledge
Spread sail towards the town;
Spread sail; the lad who loves me best,
To make the harbour's mouth;
The wind that blows is from the west;
It is not from the south.'

It is the whole story of a love affair; and the directness and simplicity of the matter, the remark about the winds in the last lines, for example, heighten the realism, until we feel that this is a piece of actual life set out before us; and the verses with their naïve directness of statement reach the level of true poetry.

Love is the general theme of these Venetian poems. And for the most part love with the Venetians is light, joyous, and gay; a matter for laughter and song; not striking any dangerously deep roots, and breaking few hearts; arousing rage and furious jealousy, on the one hand, or a delirium of pleasure on the other, for a moment; both moods passing quickly by, like the thunderstorms that are driven across the lagoons. And so the two notes of melancholy and of devotion, which occur so frequently in Tuscan song, find only rare expression in the poetry of the Venetian people; and when they do, they are, as often as not, interrupted by some fantastical touch, which leaves the reader in doubt as to the author's seriousness. For instance—

'Volème ben, che sarò sempre vostro,
Sino che durerà l'aria del cielo;
Sino che durerà pena e l'ingiostro
Volème ben, che sarò sempre vostro.'

'Love me but well, I will be thine for ever;
As long as shall endure the winds of heaven;
While pen and ink endure I'll leave thee never;
Love me but well; I will be thine for ever.'

Sometimes, however, a higher tone of passion runs through the poem; as in the following, which recalls Metastasio's lovely line, 'Ah! no; si gran duolo non darle per me'—

'Bela, co' moro, lasso testamento
Che a la mia morte no impissè la lume;
No vogio pianto, nè meno lamento;
Bela, co' moro, lasso testamento.'

My dearest, when I die this Will I 'll leave thee;
Light thou no torches for the death of me;
I would not have thee weep for me, nor grieve thee;
My dearest, when I die this Will I 'll leave thee.'

Or this, a prayer for release from love that will survive the loss of the beloved—

'Oh Dio del siel, cavemelo dal cuore,
Che de li oci miei l'avè cavato;
Fè che mi no ghe porta tanto amore,
Come che go porta per lo passato.'

'Oh God, I pray Thee take him from my heart,
Since from these eyes he 's gone for evermore;
And grant me, that it be no more my part
To bear the weight of love that erst I bore.'

But such gravity and depth of emotion are not common.

In Venice it would seem that the women fall in love with the men. The finest of these poems are almost invariably from the woman to the man. The women give the men no good character for faithfulness, nor do they ever believe in the depth of their affection. And the songs of the men are too often

marked by a conceit, a brutality and directness of desire which indicate nothing more than a passing fancy, quickly exhausted and flung aside. For instance, a woman sings, 'Let's contend no more, love.'

'Vustu che femo pase, anema mia?
Ti che ti gha le ciave del cuor mio;
Ti ga le ciave che verze e che sera;
Femo pase, el mio ben, e no più guerra.'

'Let us make peace, love, for love's sake;
It is not mine to mar, or make.
Thou hast my heart, thou hast the key,
To ope or close as pleaseth thee.'

Or this—

''L'è tanto da lontan el mio amore!
A lu ghe pianze i oci, e a mi el cuore;
A lu ghe pianze i oci, e tuti vede;
A mi me pianze el cuore e niun me crede.'

'So far away, so far away,
So far away's my love from me;
The tears he weeps are from his eyes,
But mine are from the heart of me:
The tears he weeps are from his eyes,
Those every one may see;
My tears I weep from my heart's deep,
But none can see the heart of me.'

Or this, upon her love's return—

'In dove xestù stà che ti è sta tanto,
O delicato fior del paradiso?
Dopo che ti è stà via go sempre pianto,
Dala mia boca no s'à visto un riso;
Adesso che ti è venuo io rido e canto,
Me par che s'abia verto el paradiso.'

'Where hast thou been so long away
Thou fairest flower of paradise?
When thou wert gone I wept alway,
Nor laughter lit my lips nor eyes.
Now thou art come I sing and play,
And seem to be in paradise.'

The man sings—

'Sempre no ti avrà quatordese ani,
Sempre no ti avrà, quei bei colori,
Sempre no ti avrà la bionda drezza,
Sempre no ti avrà chi te carezza.'

'Not always yours this fifteenth year,
Not always yours this bloom, my dear;
Not always yours this golden tress
Nor one to kiss you and caress.'

Or else in praise of his love who is little—

'Tute le cose piccole xè bele,
Chi no me crede a mi, varda le stele;
Tolè l'esempio da lo zelsomino;
L'odor l'è grando, e'l fior l'e piccinino.'

'All little things are pretty things;
An you will not believe me,
The stars shall be a proof to me
And they can not deceive me.
And I will bring the jessamine,
If that you still will slight me;
Its flower is small, but more than all
Its odours do delight me.'

Or this, which simply overflows with conceit—

'Co'passo per de quà, passo cantando,
Tute le bele core a la finestra;
Una per una le se va digando,
Fusse mi in brazo de chi va cantando.'

'As I go down the street I go and sing,
And all fair lasses to the windows bring;
And one by one they whisper, as they linger,
I would I were asleep beside that singer.'

The difference in the quality of the emotion is very great. Sometimes, however, they are quits: as in the following, where the man and the woman pay one another a compliment as old as the days of Philostratus, yet always fresh and sweet. He sings—

'Belina sei e'l ciel te benedissa,
Che in dove che ti passi l'erba nasse!
Dove ti passi ti l'erba ghe nasse
Co' xè la primavera ghe fiorisse.'

'Yea, thou art fair; I pray the heavens to bless thee,
For where thy footsteps fall the grass is spread
In spring-tide verdure underneath thy tread,
As though the spring were born but to caress thee.'

And she replies—

'È Nane belo per quel prà camina,
Dove ch'el ferma el piè l'erba inchina,
E la se inchina e la fa riverenza;
Amarse de cuor e ghe vol pazienza.'

''Tis Nane brave and Nane fair,
That 's walking in yon field;
And where he treads the grasses there
Bow down to him and yield.
They bow to greet his dearest feet,
And make him low obeisance.
The loving heart, it is its part
To watch and wait in patience.'

With the greatest lilt and good-humour, they make a match of it, and face the world together for no

better reason than that both are dark, or both are poor—

'Poveri tuti do femo l'amore.'
'And being singly poor, let's make a couple.'

Sometimes the girl cannot make up her mind which of two lovers she will choose, and so she plays them both with compliments, but lets it be seen which is her real love. This is a common theme in Tuscan poetry, and is always sweet, and gracefully treated. Here is one in its Venetian form—

'Bepi, te vogio ben; Toni te amo;
Bepi, te tengo serato nel peto;
Toni, la note t'insogno e te ciamo;
Bepi te vogio ben; Toni te amo.'

'Bepi, I wish thee well; but, Toni, I adore thee;
Bepi, I hold thee locked within my heart;
Toni, at night I dream of thee, implore thee;
Bepi, I wish thee well; but, Toni, I adore thee.'

Sometimes there is a note of regret that the heart is already engaged and the lover has come too late; but that being the case it must be borne, as here—

'Vustu che te amo? Ma no go più cuore;
Mi lo gaveva, e l'o donato via;
E l'o donato al mio primo amore;
Vustu che te amo? Ma no go più cuore.'

'And would'st thou have my love? I have no heart.
I had it once: I 've given it all away.
My own first love hath ta'en it whole and part.
And would'st thou have my love? I have no heart.'

It is the swallows in Venice that warn the lover to be going, as they wheel about in the clear morning

air, chasing the mosquitoes, in the months of May and June—

'O rondinela cagna e traditora,
M'avessistu lassà n'altra mez'ora!
E co'la rondinela scominzia a passare,
Svegite caro che giorno vol fare.'

'O swallow, swallow, O traitor swallow!
Could'st thou not leave me an hour's delight?
Rouse thee my love, for the day must follow
Soon as the swallow hath taken its flight.'

The girl gives her lover the *congé* with fine pride and spirit—

'I va digando che per mi morite;
Ma sto pecà su l'anima no'l vogio;
Paron de far l'amor con chi volete,
La vostrà libertà no ve la togo.'

'They say you die for love of me;
I would not have that sin upon my soul;
Nay, you are free to choose, you are heart-whole;
I do not rob you of your liberty.'

Or she laments her wasted time, wasted upon a hopeless love; as here—

'Quel tempo che go perso a amarve voi,
L'avesse perso a dir tante orazione
Davanti Dio ghe n'avaria 'na parte,
E dalla mia mama una benedizione.'

'Had all the time and labour spent
On that vain quest, your love,
Been sole and only ever bent
On orisons above;
With God I surely had obtain'd
A part and resting place,
And from my mother I had gain'd
Her blessing and her grace.'

The man is much more brutal. He simply announces that the *fantasia* is over. Love is made too easy for the men in Venice; they are spoiled; and one is glad to find that they sometimes suffer, though seldom, from unrequited love; opposition and difficulty occasionally raises the man's passion to a higher level than the ordinary, as in these last villotte which we shall quote :—

'Butite a la finestra per dolcezza,
E no vardar che mi sia un pover'omo;
Che povertà no guasta gentilezza.'

'Lean out, my love: and hear my plaint
Nor ever heed my poverty;
For poverty can not attaint
The worth of true nobility.'

Or here, where he suffers—

'Tuta la note in leto me rameno,
Per ti mia bela no riposo mai;
In fina le coverte che ò nel leto
Le se lamenta che no dormo mai.'

'All night upon my bed alone
I weep, I sigh, I toss, I groan,
For thee, my love, my very own,
Until the sheets, so sore distrest,
Cry out 'gainst me; I take no rest.'

Or here, where he cannot escape though he wishes to do so—

'Oh Dio del siel! oh quante volte el digo!
No te vogio più ben, te vôi lassare;
Da un'altra parte me ne pento e digo;
Fino alla morte mia te vôi amare.'

'Oh God of heaven! how many times I 've sworn
I love thee not at all, I wish to leave thee;
Straightway my heart repents, with anguish torn;
I swear, till death I 'll love nor ever grieve thee.'

It would be easy to continue quoting from the hundreds of villotte in the collections of Sig. Bernoni and Sig. Dal Medico; but those given will more than suffice to indicate the character of these poems, which really contain the life and the heart of the people, in so far as it has found expression in verse.

Besides the villotte, there are several ballads, tragic and comic, in Venetian dialect. If the tragic ballads be in fact native to Venice, which is more than doubtful, they only serve to prove, by their great poverty of imagination, how utterly incapable of conveying the tragic touch the Venetian temper is. The comic ballads are a degree more successful; and one of them is nothing other than a corrupt version of the well-known Border ballad, 'Hame cam' our gudeman at e'en.' But, here again, the Venetian is immeasurably inferior to the Scotch.

During Lent it is not an uncommon practice for a party of friends and their wives to meet at some wine-shop and sing *corrotti*, or hymns about the Passion. The tunes are Gregorian in character, and a female voice takes the leading part; the rest joining in the slow, grave chorus. The three most popular *corrotti* are 'The Passion,' a dramatic account of our Lord's death, with Mary as protagonist, and

a chorus of friends; 'The Hours,' a narrative hymn relating the same events; and 'The Mysteries,' which is obviously much more modern than the other two, and bears the signs of a Jesuit origin.

These *corrotti* are in no way peculiar to Venice. The custom of singing them in Lent is ancient and common to other parts of Italy. The ballads are of doubtful Venetian birth; and the true popular poetry of the Venetian people is to be found in the villotte only.

# A REGATTA AND ITS SEQUEL

AMONG a sea-dwelling people, regattas are sure to be one of the most permanent and popular amusements. And so, besides the great yearly regatta which is chiefly interesting as a spectacle, private regattas, arranged among the people themselves, where the race is everything and the mere spectacle of little account, frequently take place. And no sooner is a match made up than the people become highly excited; the prospects of the race, and the qualities of the rowers, are eagerly and ceaselessly canvassed, and the names Nicolotto and Castellano appear, and are bandied about across the tables of the wine-shops where these matters are arranged and discussed. These two names recall a very ancient and curious portion of Venetian life, surviving, where all that remains of antique Venetian custom alone survives, among the people and the sea-going class.

The names Nicolotto and Castellano indicate two factions which have divided the *popolo*—not the aristocracy—of Venice since ever they had a history. The names cannot be younger than the twelfth century, and probably date much further back than

that; yet they exist with full life and meaning in modern Venice, and waken her people to a pitch of real enthusiasm. Popular tradition, which is very likely correct, assigns the origin of these factions to the jealousy which existed between two of the federated townships of Venetia, Heraclea and Jesolo, long before Rialto, or modern Venice, became the capital of the lagoons. Heraclea was aristocratic, while Jesolo was democratic; and their mutual hatred formed the nucleus for two hostile camps, whose partisans included all the inhabitants of the seaboard. They were continually at war with one another, till, in a violent outburst of fury, Heraclea destroyed Jesolo, and was itself destroyed by democratic Malamocco as an act of vengeance.

But the feud had taken root in the temper of the people, and survived the destruction of its core; and when the Venetians were concentrated at Rialto they still clung to their factions; but they changed their names from Heracleani and Jesolani, to Nicolotti and Castellani, to mark the districts of the city where each faction established itself. The Nicolotti represent the aristocratic faction of Heraclea, and style themselves *nobile* to this day. The Castellani descend from the democrats of Jesolo. Being now at closer quarters inside the city, the factions became more pronounced and antagonistic. They adopted distinctive badges. The Nicolotti wear a black cap and sash round the waist, the Castellani's colour is red.

The principal centres of the Castellan faction were, and still are, at Castello near the public gardens, at San Giovanni in Bragora behind the Riva, and at San Gregorio on the other side of the Grand Canal; the islands also belong to them, while the mainlanders wear the black. The Nicolotti hold the parts from San Giovanni e Paolo to the railway station, and back again on the other side of the Grand Canal to San Gervasio e Protasio by the Belle Arti. At this point the factions are conterminous, the Church of San Trovaso, as the people call it, standing neutral between the two.

San Trovaso has two doors, one opening towards the quarter of the Nicolotti, and the other towards that of the Castellani. If a Castellan baby is to be baptized and the godfather chance to be a Nicolotto, he will not leave the church by the same door as his *compare*, but each goes out by the door belonging to his faction. Matters were carried even further than this; and the faction to which a foreigner should belong on arriving in Venice was determined for him by the colour of that quarter where he first left his boat. Most of those who now visit Venice are Castellani, and may wear the red. It was not impossible to change factions if an accident of birthplace compelled you to wear a colour which proved distasteful. The ceremony then performed was a sort of baptism. The new-born Nicolotto or Castellano was required to find two sponsors among the members of the faction he wished to join; and the gastaldo, or head

of the faction, baptized him solemnly into his new creed. At one time the whole population of the Giudecca changed sides in this way. They were Castellani, but deserted to the Nicolotti, and to that faction they now belong.

The Nicolotti always claimed to be the nobler faction of the two; they were officially recognised by the Government, and elected their chief, or Gastaldo Grande, with very considerable ceremony. In 1772, there was printed in Venice a loose sheet, containing an account of all the functions and ceremonies to be used at the creation of the Gastaldo Grande of the Nicolotti. The custom was most ancient, dating from the year 1328, and it continued in vigour down to the close of the Republic, after which time it fell into disuse; and though each gondolier will still be aware whether he is Nicolotto or Castellano, yet neither of the factions elect a chief as they used to do.

The ceremony of electing the Gastaldo Grande was conducted in this way:—On the death of the gastaldo, the most venerable of the Nicolotti sought an audience of the Doge in council, and there informed him of what had taken place, and begged permission to elect a new gastaldo in room of the deceased. The Doge granted this permission, and named one of his secretaries who should preside at the election. The day of the election was announced by three strokes on the bell of San Nicolò, and all those who had a right to vote assembled in the church. At the last stroke came the ducal secretary, dressed in a purple

robe, with a purple stole upon his shoulders. The secretary took his seat in the middle of the twelve presidents who had been chosen the previous day to carry out the ceremony. The secretary and the presidents then proceeded to verify the right of all those who claimed to vote. The rejected were desired to withdraw, and the doors of the church were closed. Those who were standing for the office retired into the sacristy; their names were taken down and read aloud to the whole chapter. After this the aspirants were called out, one by one, and, entering the pulpit, each expressed his views upon the reforms required, and explained the way in which he proposed to fill the office. The candidates were then locked in the sacristy again, and the chapter proceeded to ballot for the names, after being addressed by the vicar of the parish and the secretary of the Doge. As soon as the votes had been counted, the twelve presidents entered the sacristy and led out the man who had been elected. They conducted him to the high altar, and there, on his knees, he took the oath of allegiance, placing his hand in that of the Doge's secretary. Then the secretary took the standard of the Nicolotti, and unfurling it, he gave it to the gastaldo, saying, 'We consign to you the standard of San Nicolò, in the name of the most serene prince, and as proof that you are chief Gastaldo and head of the people of San Nicolò and San Raffaele.' Then immediately all sang the *Te Deum*, and at its close the doors were

thrown open, and, to the sound of bells, and cannon, and shouts of the people, the new gastaldo passed in procession out of the church.

At first the Government tolerated the constant street fights which used to take place between Nicolotti and Castellani, only confining them to a certain portion of the year—from September to Christmas. The favourite way in which the factions tested their strength was for one party to occupy a bridge and defy the other to force a passage. The battle was waged with fists and sticks, and ended in broken bones and duckings. These fights of the Nicolotti and Castellani became one of the shows of Venice; and a special battle was arranged at the Ponte dei Pugni, for the amusement of Henry III. of France, in the year 1574. For the most part the play, though rough, was good-humoured. But the temper of the people was not always under control. The battle, begun with fists and sticks, sometimes ended with steel—as was the case in 1703, when many lives were lost and the combatants were only separated by the priests of Saint Barnabas, who carried the Host into the middle of the *mêlée*. After this the Government determined to put an end to these fights and to blot out the memory of the two factions from among the people.

The authorities succeeded in crushing the street encounters; but all the rivalry of the factions was concentrated upon the more harmless amusements of the Regatta and Forze d'Ercole. This latter game

consisted in making human pyramids of various fantastic shapes and names. One faction used to challenge the other, and they were victors who could build their pyramid highest and keep it going for the longest time. In this the Castellani were the superior. But the Forze d'Ercole has long since disappeared; the daughter of the last great player is now an old woman of seventy-four. The regatta alone remains, and upon it the people expend all their undiminished enthusiasm for their faction, which neither time nor repression seems able to extinguish. Whenever a match is made the question is sure to arise, who will win it—Castello or San Nicolò.

So it was upon the occasion of which I am going to speak. A match had been arranged between two famous champions. Zatta, the challenger, represented the Nicolotti, while Domenico de Gasparis, commonly called Fighetti, had the sympathy of all good Castellani. The course chosen was from the Lido to Fusina and back again to San Giorgio Maggiore—a distance of some twelve miles. The Nicolotti had won the last regatta. There was, therefore, great excitement on the present occasion. The match was to be rowed in ordinary gondolas, and each champion chose his second man to take the bow oar. The Castellani undoubtedly had the prettier boat; their crew showed the finer form. But the Nicolotti were the stronger, and were also credited with great lasting powers; so that they started favourites. The day before the

race both gondolas were carefully scraped and cleaned. Under the stern-boards, where the hindermost rower stands, a hole was cut to let the air pass through, which would otherwise have checked the gondola's speed. When these preparations were finished, each boat was taken to the Custom-house and weighed under the suspicious and watchful eyes of many representatives of either party. They were then tied to the posts of the nearest ferry, where they remained all night under guard of one Nicolotto and one Castellano.

Sunday morning was cold and grey. A raw wind ruffled the water, bringing with it a fine drizzle of rain that soaked through coats and coverings. A strong tide was running in from the sea, sweeping round that magnificent curve by the public gardens, racing past San Giorgio Maggiore and streaming up the broad Giudecca Canal—precisely the course the boats were to take; excellent for going, but promising a long and trying row against it, coming back. The gondolas were moored by the familiar Lido, and started at 7.25. Close by San Giorgio, a favourite point of observation, the cold and stone-grey water was dotted in black with craft of many builds, chiefly filled with people of the people; there was hardly one signore to be seen. Presently comes the thud of a gun, borne muffled and thick upon the wind. There is an indistinguishable moving mass of boats by the point of the gardens; then, in six or

seven minutes, the race sweeps by. The Castellani are leading, rowing in splendid style; the Nicolotti close behind, plodding heavily, but looking dangerous in their evident strength, so essential for the ten miles of windy watercourse before them. But the Castellani are leading, so the red scarfs may chatter, shout, and rejoice, while the black keep silence. Then all the boats turn round and follow the race, the men rowing with all their might, shouting, gibing, screaming to each other—a mass of floating criticism, crossing and recrossing like black shuttles on the grey web of the water, yet with consummate skill avoiding the slightest touch upon any neighbouring boat. And, looking back, the race and its following is like a comet with a long black tail, taking the curve of the canal by the Redentore. Venice lies on either hand cold and grey; while overhead a windy wrack of clouds drives swift and watery from the sea towards the mountains.

But the speed is too great to allow the spectators to keep up with the race. At the end of the Giudecca the crowd has shouted itself breathless. Most of the boats lie-to, or are moored to the shore, waiting till the race comes back. In a little more than an hour there is a stir far away across the lagoon, by the little island of Saint George-among-the-Seaweed. Then the two white gondolas creep into clearness. They have chosen different courses, one on each side of the wide canal. The Castellani

A CHAMPION OARSMAN

are still ahead, but apparently losing ground, for they have taken the line where the current of the incoming tide flows strongest. Each gondola urges surely forward, followed by the boatmen of their respective factions, shouting advice, objurgations, entreaties, encouragement. The comet's tail, divided now, and not in mass, streams down either side of the Giudecca; and the excitement grows intense, for it is impossible to determine who is winning, the space that separates the racers is too great. But at length the *façade* of San Giorgio Maggiore is reached. A cry of 'Bravo, Fighetti!' is borne over the water and caught up all round. To the delight of the Castellani, their champion has won. Within five minutes of the finish every boat of all the throng has swiftly and mysteriously disappeared, each about its daily business, leaving the broad and grey lagoon fretted into tiny waves beneath a cold east wind, and the signori just thinking of getting out of bed.

After the race was over, the Castellani knew where to find Fighetti and his companion Fioravanti; and many of them hastened to pay their respects to the champions. It was in a little wine-shop, behind the public gardens, in the very heart of the Castellan district, that the victors held their head-quarters. The pavement on either side of the canal, and the bridge that spanned it, were crowded with people—men, women, and boys, in a state of frenzy over their

triumph. The front of the shop itself was decked with branches of fig-tree, in graceful allusion to the hero's name; and right above the door hung the portrait of Fighetti himself, embracing the flags he had already won at the annual regattas. Inside, the shop was filled by a noisy crowd of men, seated at the wine-slopped tables, great jugs of red wine standing before them, surrounded by a phalanx of tumblers, for all who came in were supposed to drink a health to the champions.

Every one was waiting to greet the victors, who were up-stairs, changing and adorning themselves for their triumph. Presently down they came—Fighetti a huge, broad-shouldered man, tall, with black hair; and Fioravanti much shorter, but even more thickly set than his companion. Then the crowd fell upon them; pressed round them; fought to get near them; an arm drew them this way, another drew them that; each one anxious to get the first kiss of the men who had wiped out the blemish on the Castellani's name. At length the salutations were over; and the heroes —rather dishevelled, it is true, but smiling—settled themselves to drink and discuss the race. A perfect babel of criticism, of praise, blame, lecturing, advice, was poured out on their devoted heads that bowed beneath the storm, and took frequent refuge in the wine-jug. Voices rose higher and shriller as one tried to drown the other and obtain a hearing for his all-important remarks; and foreign ears found it time

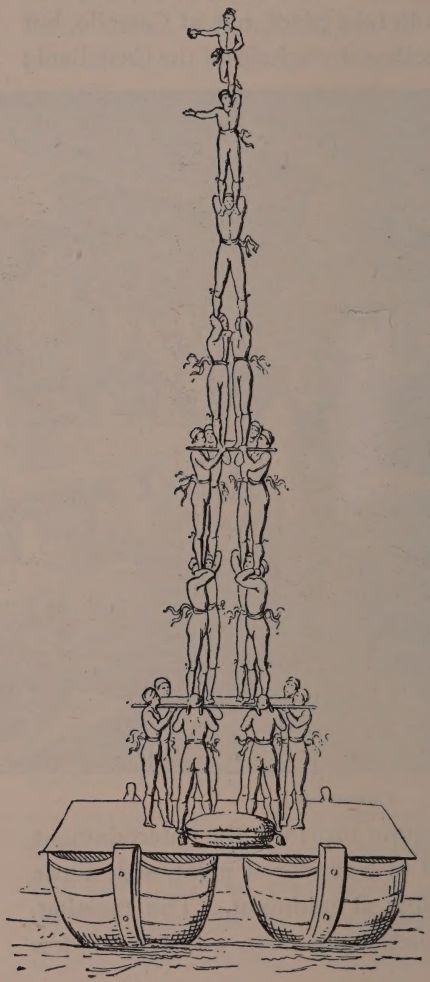
to seek safety in flight; but not until a feast in honour of the victory had been arranged for an early day.

This festival was to take place, not at Castello, but at San Gregorio, another stronghold of the Castellani;

WINE-MAKING.

and the men of Gregorio provided the entertainment, which was to consist of a supper at eight, with music and dancing to follow at midnight. The meeting-place was a long Venetian chamber, with one window

overlooking the Ponte San Gregorio, one of those rooms so common in Venetian houses—half passage, half entrance hall, with its roof unceiled and the great beams, or *travi*, left exposed. Down the middle of this room ran the table, laid for forty guests; and under each tumbler was a fig leaf, to show in whose honour the feast was held. At the upper end hung a trophy of flags, little banners with the word 'Sfida' embroidered in their centres, won by the Signori Castellani in races other than the annual one. The



FORZE D'ERCOLE.

wall was covered with portraits of former winners, lent by their families; famous *regattanti*, some of them in the dress of 1740, each clasping his bundle of pennons—red, green, blue, or yellow, to mark the place he had taken in the annual race; Fighetti's portrait in the middle of all, wreathed by a garland of his eponymous fig-tree.

It is an ancient custom, which still survives, that the victorious gondoliers of either faction should have their portraits painted; and it is a matter of rivalry which party can display the more upon the occasion of a triumph. Among the Archives of the Fari (Cod. Miscel., No. 802) there exists a collection of books which used to be kept by the champions of the red or the black. These books contain rough portraits of the winners in each regatta, year by year, whether Nicolotto or Castellano; and opposite each portrait is the rower's baptismal certificate, his *fede di nascità*, copied from the parish registers, in proof that the victor truly belonged to the faction which claimed him. Without this *fede di nascità*, the gastaldò of one faction would never allow the rival faction to display a portrait. Appended to one of these pictures appears the following note: 'This man was for a long time illegally in the power of the Signori Castellani; but when the Signori Nicolotti had discovered the facts of the case, through the many documents which they possess, they carried him over to his true faction.' Or again in the year 1784, 'The Signori Castellani

are not allowed to exhibit the portraits of the undermentioned unless they can produce documents of a validity recognised by the Signori Nicolotti.' The feeling of jealousy upon these points is still keenly alive between the factions. Once in a mixed company I mentioned a fact that I had discovered at the Frari, namely, that the Castellani had won many more games at the Forze d'Ercole than the Nicolotti. Instantly the room was in a blaze: *Siornò, Siorsì*, and hotter words flying about; a free fight seemed imminent, when Antonio, with great presence of mind, pulled off his boots, showing a pair of red stockings, and said, 'There are the best Castellani in the room!' These men are quick to anger and quick to forget; a laugh will get the better of them; and this little pleasantry soothed down tempers that had become dangerously heated.

In this long room, decorated with leaves and portraits, forty of the principal gondoliers of the quarter assembled for supper about eight o'clock. Four hours may seem a sufficiently long time for supping; but on occasions like the present the Venetians sup at great length, and leave a good three-quarters of an hour between each course. During these intervals cigars are lighted, and the guests move about the room, paying visits to such friends as sit out of earshot; or some one with a favourite voice, will, after a little coaxing, oblige the company with a song, 'Bella, tu dormi,' or 'Lei non m'amava, no!' So the

supper and the evening wear away through the orthodox number and quality of dishes, which are as unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. On such a night as this, when all the guests are men, the wine is not brought up in measures, but in one of those tubs, containing forty litres, which the wholesale merchants use; it enters the room in triumph suspended by a pole from the shoulders of two men; and its advent is hailed with shouts. As the room grows hot, jackets are abandoned, and the table looks more lively in colour from its setting of brilliant flannel shirts and crimson sashes, which everybody wears.

At length the supper comes to a close. The music arrives; and the tables are cleared away, the whole floor swept and the dancing begins. The Venetian people are passionately fond of waltzing; it seems as though they could never have enough of their slow and long Italian waltz. From the first note of the music to the very last they abandon themselves to the ecstasy of the movement with a rapture that sometimes breaks into song; and as they hear the musicians flagging, they call to them *a lungo, a lungo.* But it would require lungs of brass and wrists of bronze to play until a gondolier was tired.

As one comes away from the hot and lighted room, leaving the dancers still unsatisfied, a full moon is riding in the heavens; the walls of Venice look singularly white and distinct, the water of the canals shines like silver; the shadow and the moonlight divide the quiet streets; the calles are all cool, silent, and deserted.

# A RHAPSODY OF VENICE: 'MI CHIAMA IL MARE'

## I

'IL mare lo chiama' (the sea is calling), said Antonio, as the Brenta bore our light boat fast down the stream from Padua to the sea. The sea was calling the river and us back to its breast; and we went gladly.

The day before, we had rowed from Venice to Padua, slowly and toilfully against the current; passing the ruined villa of Malcontenta; passing Oriago and Mira; passing Dolo, with its tall campanile; passing Strà and the Pisani's Villa, now a royal lodge; the long water-plants, lilies and ranunculus, tangled the oars; the glossy violet-winged swallows darted about the bow. Venice lay behind us, but her voice was in our ears, calling as she always calls to those who turn away from her. We slept in Padua, and trod its narrow and arcaded streets, and strolled about Saint Anthony's church, with its silent, cloistered gardens and its Oriental groups of minarets and domes; and now the brown floods of the Brenta were bearing us away to Brondolo and the sea. The reaches opened out before us; broad water avenues

stretching continually on, mile upon mile; either bank bordered with an undergrowth of wood just bursting into bud; here and there a clump of poplars, voiceful with nightingales. Absolute silence over the water levels, save for the song of the birds and the regular splash of the oars. So we rowed on in silence. Each corner that was gained and turned showed us the Brenta making some new stretch for home. Then Brondolo at last; and through the lock we went, with a crowd of Chioggian market-boats, that jostled each other and us, while the men who lay on the top of the cabbage piles smoked with the deliberate passion of the Chiozzotto for his pipe, and chaffed good-humouredly.

The gates were opened and we passed into the sea. There was 'a breath of Venice in the breeze;' the odour of the lagoons, clear and pungent; a scent that seems to penetrate the very heart, and charms it to surrender. The evening wind sprang up behind, and we set our sail and prow for Venice, twenty-five miles away across the pearly grey lagoon. On and on we sailed while the day faded about us, deepening slowly into night. A fiery sunset flamed itself to death behind the Euganean Hills. The expanse of water quickened from grey to crimson, to gold, to orange, to pale burnished copper, dimpled and shadowed by the tiny waves, to purple as the night came down: then all this glory of colour withdrew once more into the pervasive pearly grey, as the last light died

in the western heavens, and darkness stole silently over the waters.

On and on as the darkness falls around us; darkness, but not obscurity, for the sky is luminous, holding the day suspended in its blue—blue that is too deep to be visible but yet is felt. The breeze comes fainter and fainter as the evening wears. Our sail is only filled and little more. In the far east, above the hills of Friuli, the clouds are banked and ready for a storm. Already the lightning flickers and illumines, like some alabaster vase, the wizard domes of white cloud masonry. Expanse, variety, and change unceasing, silence and solitude, the sea and sky, are all your own. So on, past Pelestrina, Porto Secco, San Pietro; past the great mouth of the Malamoccan port, with the three lanterns flashing alternate stars, in silence; for Antonio's stories have died away with the breeze; his laughing lips are silent; he lies in the stern full length, his arm across the tiller and his hair, massive and black, against the pale transparent green of the western sky. One great white sail steals noiselessly upon us, goes with us for a space, then as persistently draws away and fades into the night, lost in the levels of the grey lagoons—a phantom ship with never a voice on board.

At Malamocco the glare of Venice begins to burn upon the water. Three more landmarks to be passed —Poveglia, San Spirito, and San Clemente—and we

are at home. So on, tardily on, till from the canal of the Graces we glide gently round the corner by San Giorgio, with its deep-red bricks and ghostly white *façade.* Then all the piazza lamps swim slowly into view; and make a broad and golden path to us across the waves. The flames burn steadily below, ordered in threes; the rosy front of the ducal palace takes all their warmth. The bell-tower looms large and alone, with light about its middle girth; but higher, its pyramid point is faintly discerned in the upper sky. The Great Bear seems balanced on his tail, shooting his arc of stars far into the heavens from the head of the golden angel on the campanile's top. On towards the light, and life, and stir, we glide. A voice comes floating along the waters, the throbbing chord of a violin and *perchè tradirmi* dying slowly up the Grand Canal.

## II

*Il mare ci chiama* (the sea is calling), I felt when we stood at the base of Queen Catherine's ruined tower in Asolo, and gazed across the boundless, solemn, silent plain to that pale thread of grey upon the horizon, Venice and the lagoon.

We had come that morning from Bassano, where the Brenta bursts from the jaws of a narrow gorge. Green, impetuous, musical, it swirls away under a quaint old wooden bridge, down to the plain and

the sea. We left Bassano, with its ivy-mantled keep, its bastions, and circling outer walls where lovers' messages are scribbled in red—

'Addio, addio, Bassano
Addio mia bella e mille bacci.'

The hills went with us all the way to Asolo. In the fields were poppies and blue cornflowers, while the ditches by the road-side were filled with forget-me-not and the golden-headed fleur-de-lys. Over every wall hung tangles of roses running wild—'it was roses, roses all the way,' mixed with acacia bloom, some clusters pure and creamy white, others, the younger ones, faintly blushing into pink. Through chestnut and acacia woods, the road wound up to Asolo, perched high upon a spur of some sharp-pointed hills, the final episode of the great Alps before they sink to rest for ever in the plain.

We entered the town by a narrow gateway, and toiled up a steep and paven street to the inn. Copper lids, polished bright, decorated the walls of a curious old kitchen, low-roofed, with two wooden pillars supporting the beams; and from the various corners of the room—for there were many—winding staircases seemed to lead vaguely to chambers above. A huge square fireplace, round which one might walk or sit, occupied a recess, and its wide-mouthed, pendant chimney caught all the smoke from the logs that burned upon the hearthstone. The hostess was a

prim, handsome, faded old lady; and her son waited on the guests, a young man about two-and-twenty, with large melancholy eyes. He looked as though he had a story.

The castle of Asolo is a square of enormously solid masonry, built of the native stone, a fine oolite that keeps its edge after all these centuries. Here it was that the dethroned Queen of Cyprus came to spend the last years of her life, amid platonic discussions on the nature of love, and placid enjoyment of her parks and woods. From the main tower run flanking battlements, enclosing what was once a garden, and may be called so still, for the fecundity of this land is inexhaustible. On the walls of the keep, snap-dragon, children of Israel and creeping plants have taken root, and one rich fig-tree comes bursting out of a crevice; it seems to have drawn much of its substance from the solid masonry to which it clings, so strong, so sharp and decided is its growth.

Towards the mountains all the country is billowy and clad with trees; wave upon wave the hills swell up, until the great chain of the Julian Alps is reached. In a cleft of these hills lies Possagno, and Canova's Ionic temple gleams white and clear. Farther to the east is the gorge where the Piave comes through, bearing the wood from Cadore and Titian's country and all the region of the Dolomites. Right below the tower lies Asolo itself, with its campanile, piazza, and sculptured fountain and trough, which Queen

Catherine bequeathed to the town. A bright, sunny little place, full of life and joyousness; a contrast to that vast and sombre plain which lay spread out before us, untree'd and chequered in patches of green and brown, over whose surface floated the silent shadows of the clouds, the only moving thing in all that limitless expanse. And leaning over the wall, our hearts and eyes were drawn through the distance and the haze down to Venice and her grey lagoon.

So we took our carriage again, and drove by Villa Masèr, with its insignificant *façade* and frescoes too frigid even for the summer heats, across the plain to Treviso and the rapid, rushing Sile, transparent, swift, and green. Then the train bore us to Mestre and the Austrian railway bridge, and there came the rapturous delight and quickening of the breeze that blew to us, salt and free, from the lagoon

## III

And what does Venice look like from her highest point of vantage, the campanile's top? It is thither that one must go if one would grasp the singular situation of this city in the sea. Towards the Adriatic the sky is clear, and the waves are breaking on the Lido shore, a long thread of white next to the yellow sand, parting it from the blue. The slanting evening sunlight falls on the tower of Malamocco and the solitary sanitorium of Poveglia. If we carry the eye

along, far in the east the line of the Istrian coast, faint and hardly discernible, hangs low upon the horizon, beyond which lies Dalmatia, a land rich in historical memories, full of suggestions, populous with cities whose names are seductive—Cattaro, Ragusa, Zara, Sebenico, Salona, Spalato, the last home of the great Illyrian emperor, Diocletian. Nearer at hand, the broad lagoon that laps San Giorgio, as it lies asleep and basking in the sunlight, is all one sheet of burnished silver. The deeper channels, where the currents sweep along, are marked in tones of colder white, and are defined by dotted lines of sable-pointed piles. The mouth of the Grand Canal is crowded with wine boats from Dalmatia, waiting to pay the customs due upon their cargoes; the long and graceful lines of the Peninsular and Oriental steamer float buoyant on the waters of Saint Mark's basin; while out by the public gardens one gorgeous sail of a fishing-boat makes a point of vivid orange on the silver grey. Exquisite curves of the sinuous waterway, that fill the eye with delight while following them, and convey a sensible rhythm to the blood! But on the other side, towards the north, there is a hand's breadth of pale green sky, lucid above the mountains. Over the intermediate space of plain hangs a heavy rain cloud, incumbent upon Treviso and Conegliano, darkly blue and thunderous in its hollows, but, where it swells and billows, it is warmed now to purple by the sunset that is burning away beyond the

Euganeans. Up into the green spring ghostly white and spectral snow-peaks, far off, rigidly and coldly defined, with no sunlight upon them; chill and quiet and clear, like frozen souls shut out from heaven and hopeless. Between the eye and them fine misty veils of rain showers sweep across the plain. Grey all round upon the northern lagoons, and right below the brown red roofs of Venice. Once again, change and an endless variety, the spacious liberty of sea and sky and land, the vision made master of earth and air!

It is six o'clock, and the bells begin, one by one in deliberate succession, tenor intruding on bass, and also taking up both. Faster and louder swells their noise, till the whole peal are clashing and clamouring together in rage. And the passion of that brazen clangour fastens upon the spirit, and bears it out on pulsing wings that throb and thrill in the ambient air. Out and away across the lagoon, high over the needle point of San Giorgio's tower, beyond the Lido to the sea that calls:

'E il naufragar m'è dolce in questo mare.'

But the bells subside; their pealing falters sob by sob, till the bass has swung to his final rest, and the iron tongues are silent. The breeze blows clear and sweet from the sea, scirocco that will freshen till past midnight and bring the Chioggian fishermen far upon their way; the piazza lights up below;

the chairs and tables are ranged in files before Florian's; the orchestra bangs its Verdi and pseudo-Wagner to the sauntering crowd;—and yet the breath of Venice in the breeze stirs some unsatisfied longings, I know not what: '*Il mare mi chiama.*'

## IV

It is not the place alone that makes this cry of Venice, this fascination of the sea siren. It is the place and the people, so wonderfully blent together; the one penetrating the other till Venice seems to have acquired a human personality, and her people some of the freedom, freshness, and variety of their sea home.

'Signorino, will you sup with me?' It was an invitation not to be refused, for it meant escape from *table-d hôte* and the horror of white-chokered waiters. So one clear evening I crossed the ferry by our Lady of the Lily, and threaded the narrow calle on the further side of the Grand Canal, round the corner by the fish-shop and along an old brick wall with a garden beyond. Against this wall and on the steps of the houses opposite women are sitting, sewing or stringing beads and chattering, while the children sprawl and quarrel in the Campiello a few steps further on.

I found the door, and at the top of the little staircase there was Antonio, his head fresh from a basin

of water, all his masses of hair tossed back and dripping, like Bacchus stepped from Tintoret's loveliest picture, or Saint George with never a dragon left to conquer and slay; a black and white flannel shirt, a blue sash round his waist, a towel in both his hands, and his eyes laughing out as he gives the last scrub to his face. Then to supper; the table, with its spotless white cloth, spread in the bedroom, where there is just space for it and no more. A woodcut of 'Titian's Assumption' holds the place of honour on the wall. On one side is the huge walnut-wood bedstead, polished, broad magnificent, a family heirloom. The window is thrown open as the sun sinks. This window looks across the narrow calle, out upon a stretch of greenery, the tops of the garden trees just level with the sill; two tall pyramids of cypress shooting up into the limpid sky; a wall trailing with ivy and the pendent clusters of westeria, whose heavy scent steals inward through the room. Two little girls at the foot of the table, shy and whispering; the wife, wearing a fine gold chain about her throat where the crimson handkerchief goes; the baby in her arms, with its ceaseless '*dammi*' and insatiable appetite;

BATHING.

the eldest boy, grave and silent, working steadily through his *r'is'i b'isi* and his solid yellow slice of smoking *polenta*. So supper goes on, with talk and much laughter and running between the kitchen and the bedroom. Antonio is both cook and host to-night, and justly proud of his own performance. The chatter dies away in the calle below; the old women take up their chairs and retire to their houses, calling their children about them. The air blows in, gentle, inviting, caressing, persistent, but not rude. Presently a voice and a footstep breaks the silence of the lane, and, 'There's Checco below,' says the wife. Antonio hails him from the upper window, and in comes Francesco, an older gondolier, lame from an honourable wound received in the war of liberation. A babel of greetings, some show of reluctance, Antonio fetches another litre of wine, and all set to work on the supper once more. The evening wears away, till at length Antonio suggests the gondola. And surely on such a night as this the sea is calling, if it ever called, out to the cool grey levels of the lagoon.

Out, then, through the small canals we pass, and across the wide Giudecca space, where the Istrian wood-boats are moored, their masts and rigging rigidly black against the sky, a noble width of water, with sparse-set lamps on either side defining its curve. Then through the small canals once more, till the limit of Venice is reached, and before us

lies the lagoon. The gondola turns and keeps close by the sweep of the Giudecca shore. Here it is all broken and waste land, a narrow strip between the houses and the sea; grass and rubbishy masonry piled high enough to hide all roofs save the dome of the Redentore. You hardly guess a city but for the dim light staining the air above the piazza. There is desolation in these ruinous sea-walls. The place is like the *débris* of some great town, with the last flicker of the flames that destroyed it dyeing the air far off as they shiver to extinction.

But away to the right all is still and quiet across the pearly water levels; a mirror of unrippled silver grey, where the planets sail slowly. The islands and lidi loom dim in the distance. Out to sea a faint haze broods on the horizon, veiling the starlight; but right overhead the skies are dark and clear; not blue, no colour, only radiantly dark. The lamps of San Clemente burn like orange globes, steady and luminous, through the grey. Not a hush, not a breath, not a sound save the slow and measured splash of the oar behind. The sphere of Jupiter hangs high in the heavens. Down upon the tiny mortal who is sailing beneath his influence, he pours some sense of that divine satisfaction, that immortal completeness, which is his. But how to speak to this great star? You cannot. Yet look down; he is close beside you, just over the gunwale of the boat; though here on the water he is long and thin, drawn out,

restless, frayed, and flickering in the ripples from the bow; not the perfect round he hangs up there. Put out your hand and take him up! He is broken to fragments and falls in dazzling diamond drops from the finger tips.

Onward slowly, slowly floating onward. The sharp, persistent steel prow seems making right for Orion's belt, low down upon the water level, three stars rising up from the lagoon, leaning a little to one side like the line of a campanile on the mainland. The giant is prone on the horizon to-night, and his dog, with the violet star for an eye, is not up yet. The Pleiades hang tangled above him; and there is Aldebaran raging redly on the left, a fiery point upon the dusky waters; for only where the gondola moves is there the least ripple or undulation visible. Lean back! throw up your face to the heavens! The intense dark spaces are pulsing with ecstasy. Rays flash from star to neighbouring star, playing over depths for whose profundity there is no gauge. Oh! holy, divine and omnipotent mistress! nature of the night as well as of the morning, all thy large stars look down, calm and unutterably pure, and draw our souls up to their kindred fires.

Our *giro* is finished. Antonio has brought us back to the Grand Canal. There is a serenade, with its barge of many-coloured lights, moving slowly over the waters, and the gondolas cluster around the

musician's boat, Bellini's 'A te, o caro' filling the air. We too halt, the fine steel point of our *ferro* finding a resting-place for itself between two other gondolas. The moon is rising; and relieved against its pale golden light, the dome of San Giorgio stands out firm and dark in a halo of glory. The gondola next to ours sways gently to the music, as the gondolier, tall, erect, and exquisitely poised—a white silhouette against the pale blue sky—unconsciously obeys the rhythm of the song and of the sea. He is part of both, he has risen and stands there as the outcome of both, a creature of the sea, and of the song. The passion of the music is compelling the spirits of all who hear; it seems to be penetrating the very gondolas themselves, till I half expect that each gondolier will lean towards his neighbour, circle his waist and waltz away, gondola and all, down the broad water avenue and out to sea.

It is the people and the place, the union and interpenetration of the two, the sea life of these dwellers in the city that is always 'just putting out to sea,' which constitutes for many the peculiar and enduring charm of Venice. The people and the place so intimately intermingled through all their long history, have grown into a single life charged with the richness of sea-nature and the warmth of human emotion. From both together escapes this essence or soul of Venice which we would clasp with all the ardour of a lover. Venice, her lagoons, her

seafaring folk, become the object of a passionate idolatry which admits no other allegiance in the hearts that have known its power. To leave her is a sure regret; to return a certain joy.

'O Venezia benedetta! non ti voglio più lasciar.'

'Farewell they may not who say farewell.' And now from the top of Monte Generoso, across the nearer slopes of green, where the cow-bells tinkle, across the snow-besprinkled peaks, over the reaches of Como and beyond the blue expanse of Garda, there comes 'a breath of Venice on the breeze:' *il mare mi chiama.*

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